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A THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL EVALUATION OF
COMMERCIAL TELEVISION VIEWING

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Southern California School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
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" "
June 1964

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of the more than 114 million television receivers operating throughout the world, (3.7 sets for every 100 of the world's inhabitants), the United States of America boasts nearly half.¹ More than 90% of American homes have TV sets.² Most of the viewers spend more time watching the "tube" than in any other waking activity except their jobs.³ The average American viewer watches TV between five and six hours a day. The average child spends on television, in his first sixteen years, as much time as he spends on school, and more time on TV than on any of the other mass media.⁴

Television is then, an important leisure time activity, composing a large part of most Americans' daily routine. It broadcasts a whole spectrum of symbols, values, influences, emotions, and ideas to millions of persons simultaneously. By

¹United Nations survey quoted in Associated Press dispatch, Los Angeles Times, May 10, 1963.

²Gary A. Steiner, The People Look at Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 4.

³John W. Bachman, The Church in the World of Radio-Television (New York: Associated Press, 1960), p. 19.

⁴Wilbur Schramm, Television in the Lives of Our Children (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 170.

its nature, television broadcasts a view of culture and of man's place in it. What are broadcast are cultural expressions. These views have various effects upon viewers' relationships, attitudes, and behavior.

I. THE PROBLEM

Because television viewing consumes so much of the average American's time, asserts views of man and culture, and may also have other implications, there has been much concern expressed by many Protestant Christians about the medium. Among noted Protestants expressing concern has been Reinhold Niebuhr, who has said:

Among the technical advances of our culture, nothing affects the spirit of man, the richness and variety of the culture, and the solidarity of the democratic political order more than the advances in the field of communication . . . [they] have affected the spiritual texture of our society even more than the rapid means of locomotion and⁵ the ever-rising standards, due to productive efficiency.

In a "pronouncement" (a policy statement) of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America regarding the Church and television and Radio Broadcasting it is stated:

Since television, radio and motion pictures exert powerful influences on the opinions, tastes, and values held among the people of the world, the functioning and effect of the mass media are of inescapable concern to all Christians.

.

⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr in Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957) p. xi.

. . . The whole public is responsible for the functioning of mass communication, and the individual Christian, as citizen, is impelled to exert what influence he can to have television and radio operate for the public good.

.

The churches should look upon participation in mass communication in much broader terms than they now do. They should take cognizance of the influence the mass media of communication exert upon current issues whose resolution will determine the future of mankind.

.

Because secular television and radio are so all-pervading, so insistent, and so ever-present, they tend to over-ride the less persistent means of communication employed by the Church.

In listing the responsibilities of religious organizations and individual Christians, the Council notes two which are particularly relevant to this study:

[1.] To help develop understanding of the effect upon the general public--especially children and youth--of what is seen and heard on television and radio.

[2.] To encourage the establishment of an independent, widely representative council to conduct research on the effect of programs and to make recommendations for programming in the public interest.⁶

The desire to solve the problem of television's influence is not limited to churchmen. A social scientist, Leo Lowenthal, writes in Mass Culture:

. . . A study of television, for instance, will go to great heights in analyzing data on the influence of television on family life, but it will leave to poets and dreamers the question of the actual human values of this new institution. Social research takes the phenomena of

⁶ National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, A Pronouncement, The Church and Television and Radio Broadcasting (New York: June 8, 1963), pp. 8.2-8.22.

modern life, including the mass media, at face value. It rejects the task of placing them in historical and moral context.⁷

The moral context can arise out of a Christian evaluation of television. There is a need for such a context in order to provide Protestant Christians and others with a religious interpretation of the medium.

II. THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The mass medium of television has important, indeed crucial, implications for the Christian Church. There is evidence to show the Church is not effectively using the medium to communicate the Gospel. Yet there is adequate research (being used effectively by moneyed secular groups, i.e. advertisers), showing how viewers' opinions, attitudes and behavior may, at least to some degree, be influenced in a desired direction. The Christian community needs to exploit these methods of opinion change and reinforcement in order more effectively to communicate the Gospel.

The Christian Church needs better to understand the effects of television upon the viewer. These effects must be seen in the light of God's intention for man; the stewardship of time; the influencing of man's opinions; the resultant behavior in his roles as parent, worker, and citizen.

The individual Christian needs an understanding of how the

⁷Leo Lowenthal, "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture," in Bernard Rosenberg Mass Culture (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), p. 52.

medium of television operates so as (to create what he watches) to understand just what he is watching, (both explicitly and implicitly); to know why he watches what he watches; to see the results of his watching to himself and others.

With this knowledge and the questions that arise from it more specific answers from the Christian message may be found suggesting principles for the Christian television viewer.

The local church pastor will be aided in his ministry if he also has such principles and is able effectively to communicate them to his congregation. With a better understanding of the medium, with its opportunities and dangers, he may find new ways of aiding persons in living a more Christian life.

John Bachman says: "A neat formula is neither expected nor desired, but few Christians yet see as much as a line of direction."⁸ The purpose of this dissertation is to aid in showing that line of direction.

III. OTHER STUDIES IN THIS AREA

There have been notable efforts within the Christian community to aid in developing a better understanding of the mass media for Christians and others.

Malcolm Boyd has written incisively and critically about the media drawing upon his experience in the industry and the ministry. He has been particularly helpful to this study in presenting what is communicated implicitly by the media in his

⁸ Bachman, op. cit., p. 55.

book Crisis in Communication.

Wilbur Schramm has written much about the media. He collaborated with Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker in a detailed study about the effects of television on children entitled Television in the Lives of Our Children. He also has written Responsibility in Mass Communication, in which he studies the history, concepts and especially the ethics of mass communication.

James E. Sellers has shown in his book, The Outsider and the Word of God, the role the mass media may play in communicating religious themes to persons outside of the Church.

In his book, The Improper Opinion, Martin E. Marty discusses how the opinions of the mass media differ from the Christian message and how Christians can overcome this problem in more effective presentation of the Gospel.

The Church in the World of Radio and Television, by John Bachman, describes the American system of broadcasting, briefly evaluates programs, shows how improvement may be had, and then discusses religious programming.

In addition to numerous reports and articles written outside of the Christian context evaluating the medium, there are a number of important books. Some of these found useful in this study include: The Effects of Mass Communication by Joseph T. Klapper; Living with Television by Ira O. Glick and Sidney J. Levy; and The People Look at Television by Gary A. Steiner, (the most recent study of the television viewer available at the time of this dissertation).

None of the above studies seems to concentrate upon a Christian evaluation of the content as seen by the viewer and upon the viewer's behavior and attitudes as a result of viewing that content.

IV. THE METHOD OF THIS STUDY

It is felt that there is now adequate research dealing with what the viewer sees, his attitudes, and behavior. It is time that this research be more fully interpreted. This study attempts to interpret much of the current adult audience research data and consider some previous Christian evaluations of television. The interpretation uses Paul Tillich's "method of correlation," (i.e. analyzing the research data to see the existential questions implied and then presenting some answers to these questions as the answers arise from the Christian message).⁹

V. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapters Two, Three, and Four present generally mass communication, the television industry, television content, the effects of television, and a picture of the viewer.

Chapter Two sketches the function of mass communication and the television medium's particular development. The television industry is described in order to show the various economic

⁹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), III, 59-66.

and technical pressures brought to bear on the creation of content in the process of being presented to the viewer. This chapter develops the background of how the system operates with its networks, local stations, packagers, sponsors, and writers. This background is needed for the evaluation of the content and effects to follow.

Chapter Three deals with the end product of the system; the content. The content is described as "Popular art." Program categories (to be discussed more fully in a later chapter) are outlined. Finally the explicit and implicit aspects of content with their possible religious implications are discussed.

In Chapter Four the various effects of television viewing are presented broadly. Here various research data, (gathered mainly by Joseph Klapper), are condensed and presented with their relevance to television viewing. The chapter concludes with a composite picture of the average American and average Protestant viewers and how they compare with each other.

The final three chapters evaluate the content and effects outlined in the first four chapters. Applying Paul Tillich's method of correlation (outlined in Chapter Five) each one of the twelve content categories is evaluated in Chapter Six. By lifting up the questions implied in the content, both explicitly and implicitly, and the effects on the viewer's role as parent, worker, and citizen preparation for the next step is accomplished. Christian answers are suggested to these questions so as to form principles for viewing.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by summarizing the principles for viewing and by suggesting possibilities for the application of the principles. Particular suggestions for their application by the local church pastor are discussed. Ways the pastor may exploit methods of opinion change and reinforcement, connected with television viewing, are explored. Finally, the need for further research is indicated.

CHAPTER II

MASS COMMUNICATION AND THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY

I. COMMUNICATION, MASS COMMUNICATION,

ITS FUNCTIONS AND AIMS

Man is a social animal. From his earliest days he has sought to communicate with others like himself. He has attempted to transmit meaning between himself and others. From that time to this all human society has been founded upon the human capacity to transmit intentions, desires, feelings, knowledge, and experience from person to person.¹ This is the meaning of communication. Through centuries man has perfected his means of sharing information, ideas, attitudes and values. With each new communication development he was further aided in adjustment to his environment and the building and transmission of a culture.

Each of these developments can be thought of as a communicating organism whose output is greater in proportion to its input than is that of any individual. This process of much greater output over input may be thought of as mass communication. These organisms of mass communication have grown, with each

¹Charles R. Wright, Mass Communication (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 11.

development being larger, more pervasive and complex than the previous one. These communicators transmit what is generally public.²

This is what these media of communication aim to accomplish. Specifically, the aims can be put into five categories:

1. Surveillance; collecting and distributing information about events in the environment; i.e., "news." Included in this category would be news bulletins, on-the-scene broadcasts, advertisements.
2. Correlation; correlating the receiver's response to the challenges and opportunities appearing in the "news," and suggesting the social action to be taken; i.e., editorials and propaganda interpret the news and information about the environment and suggest various reactions and courses of action.
3. Acculturation; transmitting the culture of the society to new members of that society. Information, values, social norms, mores and roles of the United States are constantly a part of the mass media teaching children and immigrants the American culture. This is often done implicitly as well as explicitly. It may also not be representative of various sub-cultures within a society.
4. Entertainment; transmitting content intended to be amusement e.g., dance and drama.
5. Advertisement; transmitting available goods and sustaining supply and demand.³

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION

This mass communication process did not start to any great degree until the wine press, ink, paper and metal movable type were put together to form a writing duplicator in 1450. Modern

²Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp.32-33.

³Ibid., pp.33-34; and Wright, op. cit., p. 16.

mass communication was then born. Though that ancient converted wine press was first used in the service of the church in printing the Bible, it soon was used for printing almost anything. After the development of this printing process came the development of industry, education and indeed, America itself.⁴

In the early 1800's another development aided man in his mass communication. With Samuel F. B. Morse's primitive rooftop photograph of his daughter and wife, the foundation was laid for Eastman's continuous roll of transparent film, Edison's early movie camera and projector, and Lee de Forest's triode vacuum tube. The communication of sound was advanced by Morse's telegraph, Bell's telephone and Edison's phonograph.⁵ With these new communication devices came speed, intimacy, leisure, and extension.

With the coming of radio, man was in even closer touch with those around him. He thus became more "other-directed" more aware and concerned with what was broadcasted as the norm, more concerned with the actions and attitudes of his neighbor. With radio and even more vividly later with television, persons received simultaneously with other persons thousands of miles apart the same messages, attitudes and values.

As radio developed, experiments began with the idea of

⁴Erik Barnouw, Mass Communication (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 3-39; and Schramm, op. cit., pp. 13-25.

⁵Ibid.

television. Program experiments in transmitting pictures with sound began in the late 1920's and early '30's. Television might have even come sooner if World War II had not halted the start of regular telecasting schedules and manufacturing facilities. With factories geared for heavy production of electronic equipment following the war, the possibility of renewed television research was realized.

A breakthrough was made with RCA's Image Orthicon tube in 1945, reducing the earlier problems of required intense light with accompanying heat and purple make-up.⁶

Shortly thereafter, commercial television was launched as explosively as today's missile rockets. It took the medium of television just 10 years to have as many receivers as it took the medium of the telephone to acquire in 80 years.⁷ With the new medium launched (mainly commercially), sponsors began advertising, educators became alarmed, and viewers invited the neighbors over to watch wrestling matches on the small home screens.

From the wine press printing machine to the TV set, man has moved to increase rapid and mass means of communication. In doing so, large and complex operations, aims and functions have developed.

⁶Barnouw, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷Schramm, op. cit., p. 23.

III. THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY

The networks

Before we can evaluate what is viewed and its effects, it is important to see how it gets that way and why. It is therefore important to understand the television industry's method of operation and see how and why the production of television programs is a complicated and highly technical process.

Most of the more than 530 television stations in the United States are connected with the networks. Since most of the "prime time" shows are costly to produce and require extensive facilities, local stations combine into a network. Theoretically the local station decides whether or not it broadcasts a program. However, in practice, the station takes the network program offered without objecting. For this the station gets about 30 per cent of its normal time charges for transmitting the program from the network. With local "spot" ads and network payment the local station usually makes a handsome profit. But the local station signs away ten hours a day of the station's broadcast time to the network's programs, leaving little time for locally originated programs.⁸

The extent of the network varies with the desire of the advertiser. Stations in 55 key cities are considered "basic" for good advertising coverage. If an advertiser wants a more

⁸ Stan Opatowsky, TV The Big Picture (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 36, 37.

complete market, he can add stations in 53 additional areas. If the advertiser wants completely to cover the nation he can add 80 more areas composed of mostly small communities. Each network may own stations in five cities. The rest of the stations are independently owned and are associated with the networks.⁹

The networks traditionally "rent or lease" their facilities to show and/or advertisers. However, the trend seems to be more that the network buys a show and then leases the combination of the show and the facilities to the advertiser.¹⁰

Though NBC, CBS, and ABC do well selling all their available air time, they are intensely competitive, often dealing in bitter rivalry. This rivalry will go to great lengths.

Variety has reported that network men

. . . sneak into the cutting room of a rival chain after hours in order to scoop up the discarded film from the wastebasket; they can subsequently view this and determine what new type of program the rival is preparing.¹¹

Here is how advertising agencies characterize the networks as seen in a study report:

If buyers invested their money according to program 'quality,' management reliability and integrity, they would buy CBS.

If mass appeal and low cost-per-thousand were the criterion, they would go to ABC.

If they were looking for originality, flexibility and initiative in a network, they would buy NBC.

The report said further that CBS is "stuffy," NBC "is too

⁹Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 49.

unstable," and ABC is "hard to pin down."¹²

It is all big business with each network profiting in tens of millions of dollars annually.¹³

The local station

Each local station represents large investments of money and time. Indeed, to establish a television station is in itself difficult, both as to expense and licensing. It takes in the neighborhood of half a million dollars just to equip a television station.¹⁴

Though most local stations are connected with networks, they still have a local character and local responsibilities. This can perhaps best be seen in a typical day at a television station.¹⁵

Probably the first thing looked at by all station personnel upon arrival at the station is the detailed schedule of programs and announcements compiled in the front office. First to arrive are the engineers, soon to be followed by camera men and a producer or director. They begin to get their equipment in order.

The announcer arrives at the studio and begins to look over his schedule, routine announcements and exactly timed

¹²Ibid., p. 50, citing survey in Broadcasting magazine, 1960.

¹³Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁴Schramm, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 37-41.

commercials (written by the continuity department).

From the time they arrive, all involved personnel watch the clock, for all depends upon exact timing. On cue at the right moment, everyone does his job. Engineers flip switches and watch dials and the announcer bids the audience good morning. Following the national anthem and a commercial, the engineers switch to the network morning show, and the announcer goes out of the studio and gets a cup of coffee from the machine dispenser.

The morning network show is similar to those throughout most of the afternoon, and "prime time" of the evening, in that the network provides the show. From New York and Hollywood, network programs come into the local station, providing the station periodic spot announcements. All this is relayed to the station's transmitter and from there beamed to the viewer's receiver via his antenna.

While the network's morning show is in progress, advertising men are "lining up" clients, preparing accounts and commercial copy. The teletype is providing the day's first local newscaster with copy to be fitted into his time allotment. From the teletype and the morning newspapers he gathers and edits news and attempts to become familiar enough with it to be able to glance at the copy while he looks into the camera. If there is time he prepares "visuals;" i.e., maps and films to illustrate the news.

In another studio the late morning local show is being rehearsed. The director is attempting to mold amateurs into a

passable performance. Camera men meanwhile are planning their angles and distances. All are pointing toward a coordinated program to be aired shortly. At the same time in another part of the station changes are being made in the master schedule, by the station manager, program director and the advertising manager. During their conference other problems are discussed, such as complaints from viewers, equal time allotments to local politicians, sale of a filmed show to an advertiser, hiring of more personnel.

Back at the local morning show, the producer talks to his camera men through a closed circuit communications system to stand by for the start of their program.

With the smooth switching from the network show to the local program at the required exact second, the performers play their parts to the cameras. They also watch for signals from the producer. The camera men move their cameras and change their lenses. The studio crew changes lights and sets while the producer follows the script and clock, coordinating it all.

In another studio an announcer waits for the program to end in order to give his two commercials while an engineer checks the microwave monitor in order properly to switch back to the network at the right moment.

The process and activity are repeated throughout the day and evening until the late late show ends and the national anthem is again played, accompanied by the film footage of the American flag flying. Finally the last announcer of the day

gives the required "sign off" information concerning station ownership, frequency, etc.¹⁶

We have been talking generally about how a station operates and mainly of "live" television. Let us look at what goes into a "packaged" show (filmed) and its routine and costs.

Packagers

Most of the shows seen on network television are "packaged" programs. In other words, they are produced outside of the network and sold to it. However, more and more networks themselves have gone into the production of shows. Sometimes the network will partly finance an introductory sample show, called a "pilot," to see if it will be sponsored. A pilot can cost \$100,000 and if not sponsored or aired can be a total loss for the producer.¹⁷ In fact a packager often makes no profit at all even when a network or advertiser does buy his show, so large is the investment. However, since there usually is a "rerun policy" on shows, they almost always bring in pure profit, when they are seen a second time.

Packagers of big dramatic or variety shows are not usually able to profit from reruns so that they have to make their profit from the original sale. Series packagers, on the other hand, can profit from reruns but run the initial risk of not being able to sell the already-produced show.¹⁸

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 55. ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 55, 56.

One of the most successful packaged shows is the "Defenders." An anthology series, the "Defenders" has consistently won high awards for its dramatic qualities, upsetting the image that "message" shows do not sell and are not popular. The "Defenders" program constantly gives "messages" in its shows and has shown that a program can break TV taboos, say something, still "sell" and be popular.

The "Defenders" has been a successful show, embodying a fine combination of a producer, writers, and actors. Yet it has factors common to most packaged series-type shows. It therefore will serve well to illustrate some of the typical operations of a packaged show.

A packaged show's budget is descriptive of the program itself. The packaged show's budget is divided into two parts: "above-the-line" and "below-the-line." Above-the-line expenses involve the creative and artistic aspects of the show. Included in these costs are those for the writers and script expenses, cast, directors, producer and staff, and various amortization factors. Below-the-line costs are the mechanical-technical aspects of the show. These costs are consumed by such factors as camera crews, production staff, scenery, rent, make-up, truck drivers, administration, etc. Usually above-the-line is 40% of the budget while below-the-line runs 60%. Each weekly show of a typical half-hour series costs from \$30,000 to \$50,000. The star of the show receives from \$750 to \$7,500 with the rest of the

cast receiving a total of \$3,000 to \$9,000.¹⁹

The "Defenders" show costs \$108,441 a week, involving 85-90 individuals in producing one of the 26 hour-long episodes per year. Each episode is shot in 6 days, with most of them spent inside a cramped, hot little studio in East Harlem, New York.²⁰

Why does such a program cost so much and where does the money go?²¹ The package is represented by Ashley-Steiner, who sell the show. Their \$9,858 commission makes up the difference between the above and below the line costs.

Above-the-line. The "Defenders'" above-the-line costs are a little higher than most packages (\$43,606), since its emphasis is on such aspects as scripts and cast, and less emphasis on production items such as large studio. Those involved in the series feel that this emphasis on the creative aspects is what has caused its success, according to an article in the September, 1961, issue of Television magazine.

Below-the-line. This is the area most difficult to keep within the bounds of the budget. Clayco Films, Inc., is the production unit in charge of the below-the-line area. The production unit attempts to stay within the budget by shooting well and fast. These below-the-line costs total \$54,977.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰"\$108,441 For an Hour's Work," Television Magazine, XVIII (September, 1961), 45-51.

²¹Ibid.

The typical day of a packaged film show series begins early for actors and other personnel.²² Actors, like many daily workers, arrive at 7 o'clock in the morning to begin work. E. G. Marshall, star of the "Defenders" series, rides his bicycle through New York streets to the studio every morning, carrying his lunch in a paper bag.²³ On arrival, the actors begin to get on their make-up and are hair-styled at the studio. Sets and props are checked and the coffee is made.

Most of the scenes, with the exception of location shots, are made on a sound stage inside one of the studio buildings. In this one building are housed all of the sets used in the various episodes with a small area cleared and set up for the current scenes of the day.

The episode is not made consecutively. Rather, it is shot by scenes. These scenes are not usually shot in the order in which they are viewed on the TV screen. However sets, time and camera angles can best be utilized usually determines the sequence of shots. For example, all of the various witnesses testifying in a courtroom drama such as in a "Perry Mason" episode will be shot following each other even though in the finished show they will be seen as parts of scenes throughout the show. It is the job of the film editor to add and subtract

²²Personal observation from visit to Perry Mason set on September 17, 1962; and Schramm, op. cit., p. 42.

²³Cecil Smith, "Defender Doesn't Rest," TV Times, IV (July 14, 1963), 3.

shots and dub in or out the sound in the cutting room later.

With just 5 days to shoot an episode on the sound stage and one day on location before the next episode is to be filmed, things move rapidly.

The assistant director calls an actor onto the set, other actors walk around memorizing their lines, carpenters and electricians, along with other technicians, wait to be used on a second's notice to rearrange some part of the scene or set. But waiting is what most of those on the set do most of the day except for those directly involved, usually the director, the camera man and the actors. Others are used for short periods but otherwise attempt to keep from getting bored, by activities such as reading or knitting.

One part of one scene may take 20 minutes to set up with props, lighting, camera angles, etc. Then the assistant director calls for quiet while a short rehearsal takes place. The director cues and coaches the actor briefly. Then the assistant director calls out that it is a "take" and all is quiet. The sound men listen carefully for a passing airplane or other sound to be picked up by the sensitive microphone. There usually are no such sounds, and they continue with the scene for perhaps as little as 30 seconds. Then the whole process of rearranging the set and rehearsal occurs for another twenty minutes until the next scene is shot. And so it goes all day, every day, six days a week until a show is in the "can" to be seen a month later on

millions of TV sets.²⁴

The first packagers were stars who found they could make more money in production than from being salaried. But the largest and one of the most successful TV packagers has been Music Corporation of America, using the name of Revue Productions. Making millions of dollars a year, MCA's policy of producing "shows safely in the mold," such as "Markham," "M Squad," "Johnny Midnight," "Laramie," "Wagon Train" and others, has made TV's leading package producer in Hollywood. MCA gets some revenue from at least 45 per cent of all TV evening hours.²⁵

One of MCA's rivals is Desilu Studio, which produces some 750 hours of TV film a year. One would have to view 600 full-length movies before he would see the same amount of film.²⁶

Columbia Pictures' Screen Gems led other major motion-picture studios into TV packaging of the most used half-hour and hour series shows.

Other packagers have done well by producing quiz and panel shows, though they probably did better before the "quiz scandals." Using gimmick ideas, shows such as "What's My Line?," "I've Got a Secret," and "The Price is Right" are born.²⁷

The production of packaged shows is very large. Though networks can only use 30 to 50 new shows a year, packagers show

²⁴Perry Mason visit, op. cit., Schramm, op. cit., and "\$108,441 . . .," op. cit.

²⁵Opatowsky, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

²⁶Ibid., p. 59.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 59-61.

them about 200 pilot films in the spring schedule planning months. Only ten per cent of all new pilots may actually become TV shows that are renewed by the network. Ninety per cent of the pilots, each one costing about \$50,000 are left unused and are a waste.²⁸ So the investment, risk, and often waste are great in the production of packaged shows.

There is also a great production and consequent waste of material for shows. Alfred Hitchcock tells of such consumption in the production of his hour-long show. He reports that he and his staff must read 100 scripts in order to find one that can be used. The ratio for a half-hour script is better, only 50 to 1. Hitchcock says:

One sometimes doubts if there are enough story sources to keep things going on TV. We read everything, including mystery magazines. Maybe there are six stories of 1,000 in the latter which we could use.

Under his contract with CBS, Hitchcock has been required to produce sixty-four of the 60-minute dramas. This means 6,400 scripts are read by his staff.²⁹

Advertising

Commercial TV would not exist if it were not for advertising. Advertising both fosters and limits what is seen and heard. This is true because commercial television's costs are

²⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁹ Alfred Hitchcock, quoted by Hal Humphrey, "Suspense Is Killing the Hitchcock Hour," Los Angeles Times, Calendar, November 25, 1962.

taken care of by advertising. This means that though creative programs are frequently produced, they are of secondary importance to sales.

Hubbell Robinson, executive vice-president of CBS, favors creative television programs. However, in speaking of one such program, "Playhouse 90," he says, "Remember that we lost a great deal of money on it. Advertisers are hesitant to back such shows." Robinson continued regarding advertising limiting creative programs:

Well, this is a business and a very successful business. The marriage of art and business sometimes produces some two-headed children. Or, to put it another way, our soaring ambitions are often caught in the down-drafts of practicality.³⁰

The president of NBC was more direct, saying: "We are first of all in the advertising business, for that is where our revenue comes from."³¹ Sales are more important than content in commercial television.

Hired by the show's sponsor, the advertising agency watches closely the sponsor's show in the effort to give what they feel the viewer wants so that he will be exposed to the advertising.

A key determining factor in whether or not a show will be sponsored is what it costs the sponsor to reach 1,000 viewers with his advertising.

³⁰Hubbell Robinson, quoted by Cecil Smith, "Soaring TV Dreams Run Into Downdrafts," Los Angeles Times, Calendar, November 25, 1962.

³¹Pat Weaver quoted in Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 65.

On the cost per thousand theory, a show that costs \$50,000 and reaches 5,000,000 viewers is a better buy than a show that costs \$350,000 and reaches 25,000,000 despite the vast difference in the sizes of the audiences.³²

After the show is bought the agency prepares the commercials. Commercials' content and effects will be discussed later, but in showing their importance to television it can be pointed out that it costs \$10,000 to produce one black and white TV commercial.³³

TV advertising is crucial in the marketing of products today. The expenses of such marketing are tremendous. This can be seen by looking at a large TV advertiser, Proctor and Gamble. One in every 13 TV advertising dollars is spent by Proctor and Gamble. This firm spends over 101 million dollars (92.6% of the company's total ad expenditures in measured media), yearly on network and spot TV advertising! The company's advertising apparently is effective for one or more of P. & G.'s products are used in 95 out of every 100 U. S. homes.³⁴ But P. & G. seems to be interested in television only to the extent the medium will sell its products. A former P. & G. associate has said:

They couldn't care less about the kind of program they sponsor. It's strictly cost-per-thousand, period. If you approach them on the basis of anything that costs more than \$3.00 per thousand for night-prime or \$1.25 for daytime, you're wasting your breath. They want

³²Optowsky, op. cit., p. 68.

³³Ibid., p. 71.

³⁴"\$108,441 . . .," op. cit., p. 54.

reach, they want frequency, and they want them both for just as little as they can get them. When you talk to Cincinnati you don't talk programs--you talk numbers.³⁵

P. & G. thus does not tend to gamble with new and "unproven" shows. TV's largest advertiser tends rather to sponsor shows that have proven successful the previous year or a new show which has a similar format to an already-successful show. However, P. & G. has sponsored virtually every type of TV program. Nine ad agencies handle P. & G.'s accounts plus P. & G.'s own ad staff of 300 persons.³⁶ TV is big business!

Ultimately it is the sponsor and/or its agency that determines whether a program is aired. The axiom, as seen clearly with P. & G., is ". . . the greater the cost of programming, . . . the greater the sponsor's stake and the greater his caution. The greater inevitably, too, his control over the programming through the advertising agency."³⁷

The criterion as shown above usually used is cost-per-thousand; i.e., how the sponsor can reach the largest number of persons with his commercial. Anything that hampers that objective is eliminated. With thousands of dollars involved in each broadcasting minute, this concern is understandable. The question arises, however, is this the only criterion which should be used

³⁵Ibid., p. 55.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 55, 70.

³⁷Marya Mannes in The Relation of the Writer to Television, An Occasional Paper on the role of the mass media in the free society by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (Santa Barbara: The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1960), p. 3.

in determining the program's content?

The sponsor wants to reach the largest number of persons with his program. How can he tell how many watch? Also, how can he tell if people like the show?

In more direct forms of entertainment and communication (e.g., theater and face to face contact), audience reaction, also called "feedback," could be quickly discerned. However, TV is indirect; as a mass medium. There is no direct and quickly discernible feedback. The sponsor and broadcaster have just two kinds of feedback available to them: (1) The size of the audience, judged from sales and audience surveys or "ratings"; and (2) specific comments from those who let their views be known, mainly individuals and various pressure groups, by mail.³⁸

These two methods of attempting to "please all of the people some of the time" are only approximate indications of audience's program preference at best, as the Congressional hearings on audience ratings in spring of 1963 of the House Special Investigations Subcommittee illustrate.³⁹

But sponsors and broadcasters rely heavily on these very partial indicators for determining the fate of any program. Unless it is a relatively secure show with an assured large audience. For example, the "Perry Mason" show series does not have to worry about the ratings because CBS packaged the show

³⁸Schramm, op. cit., p. 267.

³⁹New York Times, April 23, 1963.

and it has a faithful and continuing audience.⁴⁰ However, a new show is in a very precarious position with the ratings determining its life span as the following indicates:

The fate of some \$600 million in program time billings on three television networks rests on the national Nielsen ratings that will come out of the 14 day period extending from Oct. 7 to Oct. 21.⁴¹

.....

The first Nielsen rating of the season calls for an immediate meeting at the summit of all those who had a hand in buying a show. Best way to get thrown out fast is to ask, "Why get excited so early?" It's a business that LIVES from week to week. Off the first (Oct.) Nielsen covering every competitive market, hats were thrown in the air at NBC, chins dropped at ABC and quizzical stares right and left at CBS. Mind you, some of the new shows had not yet had their fall baptism but that mattered little. Nerves were already jangling.

.....

An agency topper has said, "Early sampling is important. If they like it, they come back to it. If not, they don't and there you are." As for early ratings (average audience and cost-per-thousand) he offered this historical forecast: "If you open under 15 you're in trouble right away. If you get up to 18 on the next rating and then drop back to 14, you're in real trouble." ABC's Ollie Treyz has indicated that you live or die by the third Nielsen.⁴²

Though a program may have millions watching it, if it falls below a predetermined percentage in the tens of millions of viewers, the program is considered unsuitable for prime evening time and perhaps a failure. An audience counted in just the

⁴⁰Statement by Arthur Marks, Director, Perry Mason Show, personal interview, September 17, 1962.

⁴¹Variety cited in Los Angeles Times, October 28, 1963, Part IV, p. 18.

⁴²Jack Hellman, "Light and Airy," Daily Variety, 1961.

millions is thought to be a heterogeneous minority audience. The reasoning further asserts that there is a homogeneous majority audience that needs only to be served. However, the question is often raised, might not the continually large audience be only a large minority with significant smaller audiences being neglected?

In summary, the sponsor and broadcaster rely upon limited sources of feedback to determine how they might reach the largest number of people. Much debate rages over these criteria for determining what the audience likes and what is best for them.

The program viewed and the values, attitudes, and information communicated are severely determined by all of the involved technical and commercial processes described above. Those in the "above-the-line" area of television production generally feel handicapped in presenting what they think should be seen and heard. The TV writer is often the most handicapped and the most vocal about the situation.

Writers

It might be thought that to reach the largest number of people and show them what they all would like to see and hear would be a difficult task. Not at all, say many writers who compose such content. Just write about the WASPs (White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants), and avoid offending anyone, is the solution offered by many writers. But with such a solution, in a medium where writing is crucial, the writer is least free to communicate what he wants. However, there are TV "piece-work" writers who

write by prescription. These are the copy writers, news writers, introductory writers, gag writers and those who write soap operas, crime serials, comedies and westerns. The work of these writers is often from 9 to 5 with little creativity involved. Such writers will often do "carpenter jobs" on scripts for big name writers. The big name writer gets a large fee while the "free lance" writer gets a small, sometimes under-the-table payment.

A writer may write a 75-page screen treatment over a weekend, working without sleep, for a pressured producer who has to show the ad agency something on paper Monday morning.

Writers do not like such work, but they can not afford to do anything else. One TV writer gives an insight into many writers' views of the TV shows they write:

Same old stuff, mostly. They're borrowing characters and situations from previous successful shows and doing a rewrite on them. It's the same old pulp magazine formula. Remember when Dashiell Hammett wrote "The Maltese Falcon"? Right off the bat he had a dozen imitators. One way or another this year's shows, like last year's and the year before, wind up with the old chase. Doesn't matter if it's cowboys chasing Indians or the sheriff's posse chasing the killers or airplanes, submarines or psychiatrists. I notice mental cases are very big again this season.

You know, if people ever figure out how us [sic.] writers trap them into watching, they're liable to get angry and turn off the TV set forever.⁴³

This type of writing has been described as "distractions between interruptions."⁴⁴ It should be remembered that such

⁴³Prescott Chaplin, quoted by Matt Weinstock in Los Angeles Times, September 29, 1963.

⁴⁴Marya Mannes in The Relation of the Writer . . . op. cit., pp. 1, 7.

writers often work so that they may receive a regular salary to support their families. Opportunities for a writer to be salaried are few. Opportunities to be creative on his own are fewer.⁴⁵

Part of the problem is economic. For example, Alfred Hitchcock has thought of raising his show's budget for writers, but sponsor and network pressure to get "big name" stars for each of his shows requires too much of the over-all budget.⁴⁶

However, there are "creative" writers of television drama. Much of this writing was seen in the middle 1950s on television, though some seems to be reappearing in the 1963-64 season. But many talented and creative writers still avoid writing for TV. Money, prestige and most of all, freedom can be found more easily in other media (e.g., films).⁴⁷

Part of the limitation of freedom is a result of the medium itself. What is often acceptable to a somewhat select audience in a theatre, stage or screen, is not usually acceptable in the greatly magnified and intimate setting of the living room television set.

However, the main limitation of freedom seems to be due to the fact that the writer's work is used only as a means to sell a product. The sponsor, through the ad agency, determines the

⁴⁵Statement by Dalton Trumbo, film writer, July 21, 1962, in personal interview.

⁴⁶Humphrey, op. cit.

⁴⁷Ibid.

content.⁴⁸ Writers complain:

The people who sit in the agencies and in the networks rarely get beyond the Hudson, and yet they act as the arbiters of American taste and preference.⁴⁹

The extent of control of content can further be seen in this example given by TV writer Rod Serling:

I was called in to make alterations in some dialogue. I was asked not to use the words "American" or "lucky." Instead, the words were to be changed to "United States" and "fortunate." The explanation was that this particular program was sponsored by a cigarette company and that "American" and "Lucky" connoted a rival brand of cigarettes.⁵⁰

Some writers go along with such script changes, but often they will take their name off the script in order to maintain their integrity.⁵¹

Writers will also "pre-censor" their own work using stereotypes (e.g., "WASPs") and avoiding what they have known in the past is not acceptable. Writers feel this further stifles creativity.⁵²

Creative TV writers must also put up with often indiscriminate cutting of their works. For example, commercials cut into dramas irrespective of plot or action, selling products which change the mood of the viewer by being incongruous with

⁴⁸Rod Serling in The Relation of the Writer . . ., op. cit. p. 15.

⁴⁹Irve Tunick in Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁰Rod Serling in Ibid., p. 3.

⁵¹Maryn Mannes in Ibid., p. 3, and Trumbo, op. cit.

⁵²The Relation of the Writer . . ., op. cit.

the program. It is said that some sponsors discourage content from being too stimulating, for fear the viewer might still be engrossed in the content when the commercial appears.⁵³ Rather than face such conditions, many writers leave television.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, there are many who feel TV can be an important artistic medium with creativity for the writer. Such writers battle daily for their freedom and what they feel many persons would like to see.

One such writer is Reginald Rose. Recognized by the television industry as one of its best writers, Rose is scornful of writers who complain that they are stifled and faced with censorship. He says, "The guys who complain about the lack of opportunity are the ones who are the least talented. They don't try."⁵⁵

Rose recognizes there is pre-censorship; topics are vetoed out of scripts. However, he adds, "But now I'm beginning to wonder, considering some of the things we've done on 'The Defenders'."⁵⁶ "The Defenders" has dealt with such topics as legalized abortion and mercy killing.

The point is, you can do it [write controversial, in-depth scripts for TV] if you insist on doing it--if you do it with taste and solid dramatic values. But you have to start with

⁵³Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁴Statement by Don Hall, personal interview, July 16, 1962.

⁵⁵"Closeup: Reginald Rose," Television Magazine, XIX, (June, 1962), 70.

⁵⁶Ibid.

the thesis that you're selling entertainment medium, just like the movies or theatre.

says Rose.⁵⁷ Speaking of serious television writing, he continues:

It's an exciting opportunity, and it's also a terrible responsibility. "The Defenders" is seen by an average of 25 to 26 million people each week. . . . Being able to express a point of view to so many people is what makes me work. It moves me very deeply.⁵⁸

CBS vice-president Michael Dunn outlines what could be considered qualities of a creative television writer in the following reasons for describing Rose as a fine writer:

First is his fiery love of the medium itself--of its responsibility and power--that has always meant more to him than financial remuneration or prestige. Second, Rose has never been one to shy away from controversy or to be afraid to deal with a provocative theme. As a bureaucrat, over the years I've had occasion to discuss scripts and outlines with him. His painstaking efforts to explain his creative point of view and the reasons for his conclusions have always been amazing. And no matter what, he never takes the position that you're challenging the freedom of the writer.⁵⁹

Though there are great pressures on the writer to write by a formula, and though this pressure is often either given in to or the writer leaves the industry, writers like Reginald Rose find various ways of making more creative program content.

In this chapter we have seen the development of television and its aims. We have been introduced to the system of networks, stations, packagers, advertisers, and how they operate. We have

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 74.

seen how the American system of commercial television broadcasting is dependent upon mainly economic considerations. It has been pointed out that before the program content is screened it is altered by technical and commercial factors, the taste of the ad agency, and even the "pre-censorship" of the writer.

No doubt improvement in the industry is suggested by this chapter's discussion. How the industry can be improved and how broadcasters, sponsors and writers can become more responsible in television broadcasting is mostly outside of the scope of this paper. Answers to such questions are herein suggested only indirectly as the viewer can influence such changes. However, the viewer may have much more power to bring about such changes than he heretofore has thought. Indeed, to the extent viewers become more discriminating in their viewing this power will be realized. Discrimination, individually and collectively, in viewing is one of the main objectives of this paper.⁶⁰

We move on toward the formation of criteria for Christian discrimination in television viewing by next showing the resultant content of the system just discussed. We have seen how a program is created and what is behind an hour program as it is seen by the viewer. Now we take a closer look at the content itself.

⁶⁰The reader is referred to Wilbur Schramm's excellent treatment of this problem in his book, Responsibility in Mass Communication, op. cit.

CHAPTER III

CONTENT

We have talked about television as a process, a medium, and how it functions, i.e., its economics and the various roles of persons in the industry. Now we want to look more closely at just what is communicated, i.e., television program content.

We have seen how television is truly a mass medium communicating to literally millions of persons simultaneously with little if any direct reaction or "feedback" by them to the broadcaster, sponsor and writer. This indirectness, i.e., lack of face to face contact between the performer and the audience makes for an impersonality in the process. Television is the most intimate mass medium, bringing its programs into persons' living rooms, yet it still lacks the direct visual contact characteristic of other forms of communication in our society. For example, folk art is "a spontaneous, autochthonous expression, shaped by the people themselves, pretty much without benefit of 'High Culture,' to satisfy their own needs."¹ It is created by the people themselves directly. It requires an element of participation absent in television's art forms. It

¹Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 266.

could hardly be said that many of television's programs which might be considered art forms are extensions of folk art. Most of television's art forms (most programs apart from news and sports) more likely have their origin in vaudeville, and the circus.² These art forms, though not as old as folk art are still therefore not new. Such cultural expressions have been called "popular art" (Lyman Bryson, Gilbert Seldes, White) and also "mass culture" (Dwight McDonald). These terms usually mean content which is:

. . . manufactured commercially by technicians employed by the moneyed groups of society. . . [it] . . . is provided to the common people for a price (either direct purchase of admission or copies or indirect support through purchase of advertised goods). . . . [it] encourages similarity and uniformity.³

The result is popular art (mass culture). The expressions of the TV processes are easily understood and usually enjoyable. Therefore they are more popular than other art forms (e.g., "high culture" or "folk art").

Dwight McDonald asserts that popular art is mass culture because the many people who are its audience are related only in a very basic way. They have no identity or quality as a mass audience, no community. With its crowd-like characteristics, today's large audience loses the creative values of past cultures and falls to the least common denominator.⁴

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Dwight McDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in Bernard Rosenberg, Mass Culture (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 59-73.

With the audience large and in no direct contact with the artist there is not accurate knowledge as to the audience's like or dislike of the content. Rather than creating the cultural expressions for themselves, it is created for them. Therefore the effort is made to manufacture the content, making it as popular as possible to as many as possible. The success or failure of this effort is measured only by variable and inadequate indicators of feedback.

Thus, most of the content viewed is popular and mass. However, there are exceptions. Categories are needed to evaluate content more readily. There are many ways of classifying television programs. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the "Detailed Master Program Code" and "Master Program Code Summaries" used in the Stiener study will be used.⁵

Six major classifications, with twelve sub-classifications divided into 47 narrower groupings, compose this typology and should cover all the program possibilities offered on commercial television at the present time. They are outlined briefly below. Each will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

- I. Light entertainment
 - A. Comedy-variety
 - 1. Family situation comedy
 - 2. Situation comedy
 - 3. Standup or star comedian
 - 4. Comedy-variety regular
 - 5. Comedy-variety special
 - 6. Light musical specials

⁵Gary A. Steiner, The People Look At Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 373-374.

7. Panel, games, light quiz
8. Adult cartoons
9. Comedy-variety
10. Child cartoons
11. Child non-cartoon
- I. B. Light drama
 1. Light and medium drama
 2. Daytime serials
 3. Personal, "real life" drama
 4. Courtroom enactments--crime or general
 5. Courtroom enactments--family relations
- C. Action (Westerns, Crime, Adventure)
 1. Crime drama
 2. Private eye--sophisticated
 3. Police, detective, private eye
 4. Western, adult
 5. Westerns, other or general
 6. Adventure--"other worlds"
- D. Light Music
 1. Star, light music
 2. Medium music
 3. Teen music, dance
 4. Music, other or general
- E. Sports
 1. American sports, regular
 2. Sports coverage, special or unusual
 3. Boxing
 4. Wrestling
 5. Other sports
- F. Movies (excludes "classics")
 1. Movies, medium
 2. Movies, other
 3. Movies, other or general
- II. Heavy entertainment
 - A. Heavy drama (including film "classics")
 1. Heavy drama
 2. Movies, heavy
 - B. Heavy music
- III. News (regular news coverage)
- IV. Information--public affairs
 - A. Information--public affairs
 1. Special coverage of current events, heavy
 2. Special coverage of current events, light
 3. Documentaries on issues
 4. Documentary, interview, emphasis on people
 5. More academic issues or approach
 6. Variety--information
 7. Quiz shows--serious or general
 8. Other information or "information general"
 - B. Religion

- V. Commercials
- VI. All other

These categories broadly define what programs intend to say, what they are meant to communicate explicitly. Most of them are meant to entertain and perhaps in some cases include a message (usually transmission of the culture). Other programs, such as news and public affairs, are designed to inform (surveillance), frequently with editorial comment (correlation).

Though TV content can be categorized as to what is communicated explicitly, it is much more difficult to categorize by what is communicated implicitly. For example, comedy programs, while being entertaining, may implicitly communicate new concepts and thus educate. Conversely, heavy drama may implicitly entertain. Also apparently purely secular programs may subtly communicate religious ideas. Conversely, explicitly religious programs may implicitly not be communicating religious ideas. Content, therefore, must be seen in the added hidden implicit dimension behind the obvious explicit one.

It is this subtle secondary aspect of program content which may often be communicated with the viewer consciously unaware of its impact.

Both explicit and implicit program content of all types have theological relevancy. As W. Lloyd Warner, speaking of television programs, points out:

The choices made by various audiences are meaningful because programs are systems of symbols that express one or another set of values. In a sense, by dialing a channel a viewer

dials a symbol system. When it is one that fits his values, he feels a sense of willingness and affirmation, of interest and agreement to follow where it leads. Programs are compounds of⁶ symbolic answers to human strivings and personal problems.

These symbols often are subconscious to many persons as they watch television programs. Therefore, the symbols communicated to the viewer by the program content may be different than intended by the producer, writer, or actor. This implicit aspect of content will also be considered later in evaluating various program types.

To the extent that the meanings and functions of these symbols or symbol systems involve values and beliefs concerned with life and man's place in it, the "ultimate concern" of the viewer, they are subject to Christian evaluation. When a television program appears to be explicitly communicating nothing related to the Christian faith or may even appear to have a message counter to the Christian message and yet implicitly is communicating a realistic view of life or reveals feelings of anxiety about meaning in life, it may be seen as having elements of the Christian message in it. Conversely, programs which may explicitly be saying, "this is how life or man is or should be", perhaps using Christian terms, may in reality communicate a false and dishonest view of God, man, and sin. Then the content has unchristian elements in it.

⁶Lloyd Warner in Ira O. Glick, Living With Television (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962), p. 23.

Malcolm Boyd defines such implicit content messages as "Negative Witness." He says that this witness is asserted indirectly;

. . . it has an implicit Christian significance that needs to be excavated. And for such a task, we need the tools of Christian discrimination; and this brings us to the door of Christian theology. This is a most challenging way of bringing a large number of laymen and laywomen to the door of theology, too. Many . . . TV . . . programs are concerned, in a dramatic and compelling way, with our real human condition, with the crisis that man is sensing in living today. . . . A television show, . . . if it is honest in spirit and in truth, gives us an element of life. Activity along the lines of Christian interpretation, translating into Christian terms what is right before one's eyes in life, is of the utmost importance in what we call "Christian Education" if there are to be more Christians and if all of us are to be educated as Christians living in today's world. The Christian expression in any medium of communication is that which is essentially honest, and because its portrayal of character and event is true, enables us to perceive the Person of Christ and His work and significance for us and for our daily lives.⁷

We need to be alert, then, to implicit messages of TV programs for their religious implications. However, it should be pointed out that evaluating the implicit aspects of content is most difficult. For example, the implicit conclusions by viewers are difficult to discover and isolate. Further, some research has shown that intended implicit persuasion in content is relatively not very successful. There is evidence to show that if persuasion is intended in particular content it might be more effective to state the conclusions explicitly rather than allowing the viewer to draw his own conclusions. The content

⁷Malcolm Boyd, Crisis in Communication (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), pp. 67, 72.

may be intended to change the viewer's attitude by just giving him the facts. But unless the conclusions are drawn for him, especially if the viewer is ego-involved in the subject or in existing attitudes, it is difficult for him implicitly to draw the intended conclusion.⁸

This is illustrated by writer Rose in telling of the sale of his first hour-long original to "Studio One" in 1953:

It was called 'The Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners' and, he explains, 'was a big preachment about the responsibility of people to each other'.

The play told of a child who was killed in an accident. The child's playmates pressed for an investigation, which ultimately revealed that many people were responsible for the child's death. A teacher moved the victim when he shouldn't have been moved, despite the fact that the teacher was a first aid instructor who should have known better. A druggist was similarly at fault, as was the child's father. He had built the faulty fire escape from which his own son fell. Thoughtlessly, he had neglected to properly brace the structure.

'In brief,' Rose says, 'the play was a big plea for people to pay attention to each other.'

Since it was the dramatist's first major original work to appear on television, he and his wife Barbara proudly rushed over to see Barbara's grandmother.

'Well, what do you think?' they asked impatiently, knowing she had watched it. 'Did you like it?'

The woman replied, 'It was wonderful--and so true! Children are always falling off fire escapes.'

Rose shrugs and says, 'Who's to say what will move somebody, or what one individual or a group will get out of something? What we see is colored by our own personalities, and our own experiences, our own backgrounds.'⁹

Without the intended message stated clearly, and with ego-involved attitudes varying with the viewer's personality,

⁸ Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 116.

⁹ "Closeup: Reginald Rose," Television Magazine, XIX, (June, 1962), 70.

prediction of implicit conclusions is most difficult. Thus where explicit and specific action is recommended, it is more likely to be followed than implicit and general recommendations.

This is a caution to keep in mind in our discussion of religious content. Though again, research on implicitness is scanty. However, that which has been presented as religious content has met with little apparent success. Perhaps religious content has not been explicit enough.

Explicitly religious programs are rated among the least favorite seen by viewers. Explicit religious programs are "virtually never watched."¹⁰ Martin Marty suggests part of the cause of such failure is due to the fact that time allotted for such programs is either when "the saints are in church and the sinners in bed" or "when people with sense are out in the park or on the beach."¹¹ So, apart from any message, the hours allotted for religious programs virtually preclude any viewers. But the explicit religious program also usually has content which is "creedless and aimless", presented in a general way, as a "glue for common purposes"; the various faiths are presented as equal options, or Christian worship is presented as in a church.¹² Both the time spots and content make for lack of "appeal" and

¹⁰Steiner, op. cit., pp. 375, 167.

¹¹Martin E. Marty, The Improper Opinion (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 44.

¹²Ibid., pp. 49, 53, 57, 60.

creativity in explicit religious TV content.

Marty asserts the Christian message can be communicated meaningfully, effectively and in consistency. But this can not be done in a "head-on, direct, frontal assault."¹³ Using the "mask" of television, viewers may hear the voice and see the face and thus ". . . participate in or see an exchange with the interior life of the other one, and therefore perceive one of the implicit expressions of Christianity."¹⁴

The implicit Christian message in television programs may be "preprophetic"; being limited from the Christian viewpoint. Yet judgment about man's condition short of reference to the God of the Biblical faith gives realism and is superior to the explicit and usually sentimental and illusory offerings.¹⁵

Marty says the implicit Christian message in "the secular at its best"

opens the door for a fuller witness to the Christian faith. Its method, therefore, is implicit. It fuses art with description; it cares about the world and shows this by the way it tells its story.¹⁶

Whether intended or not, implicit Christian content is important. We will be attempting to discover it in specific program types in Chapter Six.

In this chapter we have attempted to show that due to TV content being formed for large numbers of persons, it tends to

¹³Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 137.

be light, easily understood, enjoyable and therefore, more popular than other "art forms". There has been widespread criticism of TV's content as "popular art" and "mass culture," lacking in creativity and responsiveness to large sections of the population.

Television programs, classified, generally as to the type of material explicitly communicated, provide a framework for evaluation in a later chapter. Our next step toward a Christian evaluation of TV content and effects is to see generally viewers' reactions to what is seen and heard. It is important, then, to know just what effects TV content has upon the viewer.

CHAPTER IV

EFFECTS

Before Christian criteria can be realistically applied to television viewers' behavior and attitudes and the content they see, we must clearly understand the possible effects of television upon the viewer. Much confusion exists in this area. Some say that violence in TV programs fosters crime. Others say it has no effect. It is argued by some that escape type programs cause people to be unaware of reality.

Efforts of social scientists to accurately discern the true effects of television and other media upon their audiences has to some degree failed. The variables involved in such an undertaking have been innumerable and virtually insurmountable. Joseph T. Klapper speaks of such variables documented in the laboratory and the social world:

'Who says what to whom' were early seen to be muddled by audience predispositions, 'self-selection', and selective perception. [More recent studies show] . . . a host of other variables including various aspects of contextual organization; the audiences' image of the sources; the simple passage of time; the group orientation of the audience member and the degree to which he values group membership; the activity of opinion leaders; the social aspects of the situation during and after exposure to the media, and the degree to which the audience member is forced to play a role; the personality pattern of the audience member, his social class, and the level of his frustrations; the nature of the media in a free enterprise system; and the availability of 'social mechanism [s] for implementing action drives'.

The list of variables is far from complete. In fact, Klapper says further: "almost every aspect of the life of the audience member and the culture in which the communication occurs seems susceptible of relation to the process of communication effect."¹

However, some generalizations can be made about some effects of mass communication and specifically television. Specific effects of specific content types will be discussed in Chapter Six as their religious implications are assessed. These generalizations result from the approach of viewing television as one influence among other influences in a total situation; i.e., television can not be seen as an influence alone or apart from other influences. Nevertheless, television in some cases may be the major, necessary or sufficient cause of effects.

I. OPINION REINFORCEMENT AND CHANGE

Can viewers' opinions be changed in watching TV? If the TV viewer has an opinion, chances are that that opinion will be reinforced rather than changed by his viewing a program intended to persuade him. The viewing may at times alter the intensity of his opinion but persuasion of the viewer (conversion) to a different opinion seems to be rare. This has been found true in pre-election campaigns. For example, Schramm and Carter found that a 1959 election campaign telecast changed the intended vote

¹Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 3-4.

of just one out of 65 interviewed viewers.²

Why is reinforcement more likely to be the effect of persuasive content than conversion? Apparently, the television program alone is not the cause. Rather, it, working with other factors, most often produces such an effect.³

For example, the viewer usually sees what he wants to see. He views programs which agree with his existing attitudes and interests. He does not seek out opposing viewpoints. If he by chance does watch a program with a different point of view than his own, he either seems not to perceive it, reinterprets it to fit his existing views, or he tends to easily forget it. These reactions are called "selective exposure", "selective perception", and "selective retention." These selective processes do not always occur and it is not known whether they function over long periods of time to unsympathetic programs. However, they do seem to occur more often than not.⁴

The influence of group membership. Of particular relevance to the church are the research findings showing the influence of group membership upon perception, opinions, and attitudes.

The research of Katz and Lazarsfeld show that many apparently individual opinions and attitudes are really social; i.e., they are the individual's group norms. People are likely

²Ibid., pp. 15, 17.

³Ibid., p. 18.

⁴Ibid., pp. 19, 25.

to belong to groups whose opinions are the same as theirs. These opinions get intensified by intra-group discussion; i.e., the various benefits of group membership tend to act as a deterrent to any opinion change.⁵

In addition to "anchoring" existing opinions, membership in a group may bring about reinforcement and deter conversion by formally or informally directing members to sympathetic television programs. However, if members do not view sympathetic programs directly, reinforcement may still be affected through inter-personal dissemination of their contents and the influence of opinion leaders. Thus a program's influence may be much greater than ratings or any other audience polling would show. "Face to face" and "word of mouth" dissemination of the program's sympathetic and persuasive content may greatly enhance the audience and indeed intensify the influence of the content.⁶ For example, members of a church may be advised of a program regarding racial integration, of which the church is in favor. Even though some may have missed the sympathetic program, it may be favorably reviewed in a church school discussion class and praised by a respected friend or "opinion leader." All of this tends to reinforce the church norm favoring better race relations.

The influence of opinion leaders. Opinion leaders appear to play a most important role in influencing their friends, who

⁵Katz and Lazarsfeld in Ibid., p. 27.

⁶Ibid., pp. 29-30.

are often of like primary groups, groups which are important to the individual members. These opinion leaders are more exposed to mass media than those whom they influence, usually in one area; e.g., voting or marketing.⁷ Therefore, an opinion leader views a program, is influenced by it (for reinforcement or change), and then passes it on to his friend who does not view as much TV.

Opinion leaders seem likely to be strong members, indeed leaders, of the group to which a leader and follower belong. Again, a church member who may lead a group within the church, being intimately familiar with the church's position on various issues and its values may guide other church members to attaining such values and positions aided by sympathetic TV programs.

The effect of most of television's content (light entertainment) is to reinforce the sanctified views of our culture (what Marty calls the "Proper Opinion"). For example, sex is treated with explicit reserve, and thus reinforces that view. Studies of TV content show that television programs tend to mirror the more conservative values of our society.⁸ So rather than having the "negative" effects often attributed to it by critics, television content actually tends to reinforce viewers'

⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁸Charles Winick, Taste and the Censor in Television. An occasional paper on the role of the mass media in the free society by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (Santa Barbara: The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1959).

opinions, binding them closer together rather than providing opportunities for freer expression, insight and opinion change.

It might be thought that the few existing controversial programs dealing with varying points of view and previously taboo subjects would effect opinion change. However, there is evidence that the increased popularity of such programs may only be evidence of viewing for action and shock value. Klapper cautions:

In short, for much of the audience, the controversial program may well serve to reinforce some taste or behavior pattern rather than to provoke a weighing of ideas. And even among those who perceive its topical controversy, a considerable number will be likely selectively to perceive the discussion so that it reinforces their existing views.⁹

The popularity of such programs may even be in doubt. Viewers ask for heavy entertainment and information content. They say that there should be more of it. However, Steiner concludes in his thorough study:

. . . even the most discriminating viewers choose the trivia more often than not when something else is available--especially when that something else is a serious, information show. That is to say they watch the light diversion, whether or not they "prefer" it. . . . the effort to find and watch the "best" by their own verbal criterion of best is often not made.¹⁰

Klapper points further to the fact that "controversial," dramatic content probably still follows public acceptance rather than leading it. He reasons that some concepts may have "seeped down" to become part of the popular culture, making them no longer

⁹Klapper, op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁰Gary Steiner, The People Look at Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 203.

shocking and thus in accord with popular morality.¹¹

Again, the difficulty may be seen in communicating controversial content; content not considered generally accepted by most people in the culture. The Christian message is "controversial" and is not viewed on TV when presented directly or explicitly as the Christian message. However, it would appear that Christian values may (as indeed, many undoubtedly have, even if in greatly diminished strength) "seep" down to accord with public morality and in this form be reflected in TV content. Of course, not much should be made of this. At best, generalized values generally in accord with Christian values would be reinforced. However, the Christian community therefore can aid in more specific Christian values being reflected in TV programs more explicitly. In our pluralistic society such possibilities are limited. Television can not therefore broadcast the Christian faith explicitly as being generally acceptable.

It should be pointed out, Klapper's statement above notwithstanding, that there are dramatic and entertaining programs (e.g., the Defenders), which may lead public acceptance of controversial material which may be in accord implicitly with the Christian message.

Effective persuasion. There are other effects which are less clear than those just discussed above, and yet are still discernable. These effects stem from the medium itself, and

¹¹Klapper, op. cit., p. 42.

from the situation in which communication occurs. They are related, however, to their ability to persuade viewers. If these devices and techniques causing these effects are carefully exploited they increase the probability that viewers will either have their attitudes and opinions reinforced or reduce their resistance to conversion, depending upon the desired result.¹² Such techniques and devices lend themselves to careful consideration by Christian broadcasters, viewers and pastors. When there is a situation in which the source (i.e., performer, commentator, etc.) is held in high esteem by the viewer, the content is made more persuasive. The persuasiveness is effective when these sources may be considered to have high prestige, be highly credible, expert, trustworthy, close to, or just likeable by the viewer. The role of the famous personality, for example, seems to add weight to what is seen.¹³

It has been found that television itself seems to give prestige to the persons and ideas they broadcast. Status is thus conferred on what television chooses to communicate.

Lazarsfeld and Merton describe the audience's reasoning: "If you really matter, you will be at the focus of mass attention and, if you are at the focus of mass attention, then surely you must really matter."¹⁴

¹²Ibid., p. 128.

¹³Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁴Lazarsfeld and Merton in Ibid., p. 105.

Indeed, television often "builds up" personalities so that they become trusted "prestige sources" and themselves aid persuasion.¹⁵

Though more research is needed, evidence shows that face-to-face contact is more effeciently persuasive than any one mass medium. However, of all the mass media, television and films are probably the next most persuasive. This is probably due to the fact they are visual and require complete attention and give the viewer close to what he receives in face-to-face contact; a sense of participation, personal access, and "reality." Particularly effective in persuasion is the use of several mass media plus face-to-face contact. In such a use of communication, different audiences are reached, status and prestige are given the speaker and his group (local and national), just by appearing on the media and the primary group is strengthened in the local organization.¹⁶

The possibilities for exploitation of this technique of use of communication media or medium is probably obvious. For example, the local pastor by appearing on a television program reaches many outside of his church. He and his church are given status and prestige, adding weight to his message. Also, the views of the pastor's parishioners are reinforced, strengthening the local church.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 108, 110, 111.

In turning to the most effective kind of content in persuasion we find that giving both sides of a question is more effective than giving one side when attempting to convert the highly educated. However, one-sided presentations are more effective in converting the less educated.¹⁷

Though anxiety has religious implications and at times may serve a redemptive function, caution should be used in exploiting anxiety for persuasion explicitly. Viewers are likely not to be scared into any action against a threat, whether it be the dangers of lung cancer as used to stop smoking, possibility of a nuclear holocaust to stimulate civil defense efforts, or perhaps the possibility of Hell for "sinners" so as to take steps to save their souls. Research shows consistently that "threat appeals" are less effective the more the threat becomes extreme. Viewers are likely to recoil rather than learn when their anxieties are too highly stimulated.¹⁸

As advertising agencies know, repetition of content persuades viewers. However, to be most successful, it must not just parrot the same message constantly, as this tends to irritate the audience. Persuasion has been found most effective when the content, the message, is repeated but with variation.¹⁹

Another important consideration in TV content effectively persuading viewers is the general "temper of the times"; the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 117-118.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 119.

"climate of opinion." There seems to be a "bandwagon effect" which fosters persuasion in mass communication. Klapper states: "A vast body of research has demonstrated that people will adopt opinions simply because they believe those opinions to be in accord with the majority view."²⁰

For example, the viewer may be more persuaded in a desired direction if there is believed to be a current majority opinion in that direction. However, if the viewer is a member of a very small minority (e.g., pentecostal sect) his resistance to change may intensify when he learns that others think as he does.²¹

In summary, when attempting to persuade a change in views or reinforce viewers' opinions, the most effective person to present the content is one who is held in high esteem by the viewer. One way of "building up" esteem or status for the viewer is simply to have the person appear on television.

The most effective persuasion is accomplished by using several mass media and face-to-face contact. In this way, different audiences are reached and the person and the group he represents doing the communicating is given status and prestige while strengthening the local organization. The church and local pastors seem ideally located to exploit such effects.

The effectiveness of the content of the persuasion depends on the audience. Presentation of both sides of the question is most effective with the highly educated. One-sided presentations

²⁰Ibid., p. 125.

²¹Ibid., p. 131.

are more effective with the less educated. The presentation should avoid extreme threat appeals. Repeating the content while varying it tends to be persuasive.

If the viewer is not a member of a very small minority group he is likely to be persuaded in the direction believed to be the current majority opinion.

II. NEW OPINIONS

Much of what has been said regarding persuasion and opinion (reinforcement and change) applies also to the creation of new opinions. Television is more effective in creating new opinions than changing "old" ones. Since direct persuasion to change a viewer's opinions is difficult, using a "side attack" of building up new opinions is thought to be more effective. For when the new attitude is developed enough to conflict with the old, conversion may resolve the situation. Thus, the viewer caught in cross pressures of attitudes are more susceptible to attitude change due to the conflict.²² But by a television program simply presenting an interpretation of events and issues of which the viewer is unaware, a sympathetic reaction is likely to be effected. The Lang and Lang study shows that viewers tended to take over as their own interpretations of events and issues broadcasted with which they were unfamiliar.²³ So whether

²²Ibid., pp. 90, 91.

²³Lang and Lang in Ibid., p. 56.

the aim is to simply create a new opinion or to create a new opinion to indirectly convert from an old one, this may be accomplished by a TV program treating or defining an event or issue about which the viewer was previously unaware.

When a viewer has no pre-existing opinions, it is likely that television content giving him a new opinion will also make him resistant to future television content with contrary views. Therefore, "first come, most effective" in influencing opinion. This can best be seen in influencing children. Since children are particularly unaware of many opinions and attitudes, television programs are likely to create many new opinions and attitudes in them.²⁴

The possibilities of presenting religious opinions to viewers outside of children as being "unfamiliar" or "new" seems remote. But creativity in programing in a contemporary idiom may indeed present the gospel as new to many. Certainly a very probable presentation of Christian interpretations as being new to the viewer may occur as the church relates its message to constantly new moral and social issues and events of the day.

III. THE AVERAGE AMERICAN AND PROTESTANT VIEWERS

To round out and conclude these first four chapters on a general overview of television, we turn to a picture of the average American viewer and the average Protestant viewer showing

²⁴Klapper, op. cit., pp. 55-61.

what most persons in their categories think about and react to television.

The average television viewer has a high school education or less, earns less than \$8,000 a year, and accounts for three quarters of all television homes and even a higher number of the effective audience at any particular time. This is due to the fact that he views TV more often than those of a higher socio-economic position.²⁵

This great amount of viewing time (hours each day), has its rewards as well as penalties. The average viewer feels relaxed in front of his TV set. He feels that it is a pleasant activity even though he is somewhat aware it has its penalties as well. One of the penalties is his paying for his viewing by not being able to do other activities for which he feels guilty.

For example, TV watching replaces other forms of family interaction, taking up an important role in the social life of the family. The benefits of the types of family interaction replaced by TV are not as apparent to the viewer as is TV watching. Yet there is a feeling that TV replaces conversation, visiting and going out. In fact, the average viewer feels guilty that he spends so much time in front of the TV set at all, especially the more educated he is. He feels he is doing nothing when watching TV and that such a relaxing activity is unjustified; there is no inherent justification for him to watch.²⁶ He claims

²⁵Steiner, op. cit., p. 231.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 228-230, 65.

that TV is not as important as it once was. Yet the fact is that he watches TV as much as before. There seems to be an embarrassment about watching what the viewer feels is "too much TV." "It is no longer fashionable to state that you watch it very regularly or very intensely."²⁷ An indication of this embarrassment may be the trend of moving the TV set from the living room to the more casual and private home locations (e.g., family room or bedroom).²⁸

In spite of his disclaimer, the average viewer is greatly dependent upon the TV set to sustain his daily routine. For example, when TV watching is interrupted (due to a broken or malfunctioning set) many have difficulty in finding other family activities to do and get the set repaired as quickly as possible.²⁹

Since he watches so many hours each day, he views pretty much what happens to be broadcast at the time.³⁰ However, with TV's novelty diminished, the viewer is not as easily entertained, excited or overwhelmed by what he sees as he may once have been. "This is a continuous and repetitive process, with newness and novelty attracting attention and familiarity resulting in boredom

²⁷Lloyd Warner in Ira O. Glick, Living With Television (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962), p. 31.

²⁸Ibid., p. 32.

²⁹Steiner, op. cit., pp. 99, 294.

³⁰Ibid., p. 228; and Glick, op. cit., p. 20.

and lack of interest."³¹ The viewer accepts much mediocrity in TV, being skeptical in general for the world to produce much greatness; i.e., he does not expect "great" TV.³² Nevertheless, the viewer does feel that programs are "better than satisfactory," finding his favorites very enjoyable.

He remembers some serious TV programs (e.g., original dramas), but TV comedy stars stick most in his memory. Accordingly, the programs he likes most are "comedy-variety" and "action" programs.³³ He is not likely to watch serious and informative public affairs programs (this includes religion), for he rarely watches TV to get information aside from the daily news and weather. Also, he distrusts ". . . the false aspirations of socially mobile people who pretend to enjoy opera and modern art without understanding either." He is not sure he has the capacity to receive and appreciate such "great" programs. Ironically, he would like TV to be more informative and educational if this could be done without sacrificing entertainment programming.³⁴

As a parent, the average viewer seems to recognize dangers and problems in TV watching, but feels that TV's advantages to him and his children overcome this. The viewer-parent hopes his children will not be taught bad things, become too excited or

³¹Glick, op. cit.

³²Steiner, op. cit., p. 229.

³³Ibid., p. 86.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 366-368.

too absorbed and that they will learn something from TV. But parent viewers often watch what they and their children enjoy rather than what parents feel may be best for the children. Such programs (those they enjoy) often contain violence. But the average parent feels it is not his responsibility to have to keep a constant eye on the TV set in order to protect his children from seeing imitable violence. He feels that broadcasters should not present such violence.³⁵ On the other hand, parents value the TV set for their not having to "keep an eye on the children." Though they themselves consider television's content at least partially harmful to children, parents admit to delegating child supervision to television! The reasons parents most often give for the TV "baby-sitting" are the relief that comes from having children kept quiet, out of trouble, and "out of my hair."³⁶

When we look at the average Protestant television viewer, we see that he is not much unlike the average American viewer in attitudes and habits.³⁷

Most Protestants with a high school education or less like TV in general. However, Protestants who have been to college or beyond are less enthusiastic about TV in general. More than half of these latter viewers are either ambivalent or critical of TV in general. These college educated Protestants are even more critical of TV than college educated non-Protestants.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 364, 38.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 166, 401.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 401, 201.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 376, 401.

In general, research (what little there is on viewing attitudes and habits by religion) shows that Catholics are least critical of TV, Protestants next and Jews being quite critical. This pattern of Protestants being "in the middle" between Catholics and Jews with regard to findings is fairly consistent. For example, Protestants are happier watching TV than Jews, but less so than Catholics. Jews tend to select heavy entertainment twice as often as Catholics, while Protestants fall in the middle. However, Jews and Protestants watch about the same amount of light entertainment, while their Catholic brethren watch more of such programs. Also, Protestants and Jews watch more heavy entertainment, news and information programs than Catholics. In this instance, Protestants and Jews watch less light entertainment than the average American viewer, while Catholics watch more. But when the choice is between either heavy entertainment, heavy information or light entertainment, Protestants, like the average American viewer, most often select light entertainment.³⁹

Protestants (even those who are dissatisfied with TV) want television to make them happy. And so, like the average American viewer, they like and fondly recall comedy-variety programs more than any other single type.⁴⁰

Only 1% of all viewers list among their favorites programs concerned with religion explicitly. And only 1% of all Protestant viewers consider religious programs among their favorites!

³⁹Ibid., p. 201.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 401, 166.

Catholics rate about the same, while Jews have no such religious favorites.

However, when it comes to actually viewing religious programs, by anyone, percentages are so low as to be relatively zero! Whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, religious programs are not selected to be viewed.⁴¹

Any Christian evaluation of content and effects must be based, as far as possible, upon facts rather than personal preference. There is some research as to the actual effects of the mass media in general and television in particular. This chapter has shown the possibilities and limits of possibilities of several television effects. Reinforcement of opinion is common and usual. Opinion change is uncommon and difficult to accomplish. However, persuasion of the viewer is possible under certain conditions, especially with regard to creating new opinions.

Finally, the viewer himself has been described generally as an American and a Protestant. The average American appears to have ambivalent feelings about his and his family's viewing habits, yet it is an important part of his daily activities. He watches mainly light entertainment but has concerns about his children watching such shows. The Protestant viewer appears to differ little from the average American viewer.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 401.

CHAPTER V

THE CRITERIA FOR AN EVALUATION OF TV PROGRAMING AND VIEWING

The criteria used here in evaluating television viewing are derived from the "method of correlation" described by Paul Tillich.¹ These criteria will be applied in the next chapter in order to derive specific principles for TV viewing.

The method of correlation explains the contents of the Christian faith by way of existential questions and theological answers in a context of interdependence. A theological analysis is made of the human situation (man's existence). Out of this situation the existential questions come. The human situation arises out of the fact that man is finite. Man is limited and yet he is able to ask about the unlimited, the infinite to which he belongs. But his asking indicates he is separated from the infinite. When man becomes aware of his finitude the fact that he can look to the infinite and realize he will die, he becomes anxious. For anxiety is ". . . the self-awareness of the finite self as finite."²

This anxiety may arise out of four categories of finitude.

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), III, p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 192.

These categories are the forms in which man is aware of and experiences reality. In each category anxiety arises due to the threat of nonbeing (what man is not yet or is no more) inherent in it. Many persons do not know the meaning of their existence in a profound sense in these commonly experienced categories. Thus many feel overcome daily by these anxieties and therefore live in despair. However, the possibility is present in each category for a person to overcome the anxiety with "the courage to be," as it is demonstrated in the Christian message.

The four main categories of finitude are time, space, causality, and substance. TV, as it deals with life, inevitably also presents views of these categories. The views may fall anywhere along a continuum from courage to despair.

Time is the main category of finitude. Here the anxiety of death in time is present, the "anxiety of transitoriness." Affirmation of the present is thus difficult for man with this anxiety. As Tillich says: "It is hardest for him to affirm the present because he is able to imagine a future which is not yet his own and to remember a past which is no longer his own."³

The second category is space. "To be means to have space."⁴ Man tries to provide and keep his space, i.e., physical location of body, home or other locality; social location of job, status, group, historical period. Man necessarily has to have space. He was created that way. These are inherent needs and

³Ibid., p. 194.

⁴Ibid.

are not wrong in themselves. But he can not finally own "his" space; he has no final "property rights." Faced with this prospect of losing his space and thus his being anxiety and insecurity are created and felt. Physically and socially, man futilely attempts to make his space secure. But this only serves to repress the anxiety rather than face the insecurity courageously.

Another category is causality. Being a creature man can not find the cause of his existence in himself, he is not self-sufficient. So the threat or anxiety over non-being exists when he asks why he is.⁵ But courage in self-reliance is also a possibility in this category.

Substance is the fourth category. Substance indicates that there is a ". . . relatively static and self contained quality in finitude," that things may be depended upon. Anxiety arises when change shows the "relative nonbeing of that which changes," that relatively things can not be depended upon to remain static. For example, anxiety arises when death is expected to cause the loss of one's identity with his self.⁶ But the significance of something can be affirmed even though it may be recognized that its substance can disappear. In these categories the questions of existence are raised.

Thus the "tragic ambiguities of our historical existence," our anxiety producing situation causes us to ask ultimate questions, questions concerning the whole of our existence. In

⁵Ibid., p. 195.

⁶Ibid., p. 197.

the method of correlation the symbols used in the Christian message are demonstrated to be the answers to these questions.⁷

The analysis of the human situation and its categories may use various materials ". . . made available by man's creative self-interpretation in all realms of culture."⁸ Man expresses this self-interpretation in various cultural ways. One of these cultural expressions is television content.

The effort is made in this method to analyze the theology behind this cultural expression, to discover its ultimate concerns.

This may be accomplished by noting its "style." In the style of a cultural expression man sometimes gives an answer to the question of the ultimate meaning in life by showing his self-interpretation. It may not be the Christian answer. From the Christian viewpoint the answer may be invalid. But where there is ultimate concern expressed there is a religious dimension. This means that religion is necessarily seen in every style whether the creator of the cultural expression knows it or not.⁹ This we have defined earlier as "implicit religious content."

From Tillich's viewpoint, it can easily be seen why the religious dimension is ever present in culture. He says that religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but

⁷Ibid., pp. 60, 62.

⁸Ibid., p. 63.

⁹Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 70.

is the dimension of depth in all of its functions.¹⁰ Religion has tried to rest in each one of man's spiritual life functions, apart from the others--in the ethical, cognitive, aesthetic. But it has not rested in these functions exclusively. However, religion can point to what is ultimate in all of these and therefore have depth in them all.¹¹ Religion, then, is the ground of all of spiritual life and should not be narrowly defined apart from secular activity and make itself ultimate. The fact, Tillich implies, that religion has made itself ultimate and separate from culture has resulted in the reaction against religion by the secular world.¹² As Martin Marty points out in viewer rejection of explicit "frontal attacks" of religious TV programs.¹³ This situation of separation is our present predicament.

This predicament can be seen in the style of today's cultural expressions. The spirit of industrial society characterizes for Tillich the style and movement of our culture today and is countered by the spirit of the existentialist analysis of man's actual predicament.¹⁴

Culture today has two main characteristics. (1) With man concentrating on methodical investigation and technical transformation of his world and himself, he loses the dimension of

¹⁰Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

¹²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹³Martin E. Marty, The Improper Opinion (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 104.

¹⁴Tillich, Theology of . . ., op. cit., p. 43.

depth while he is living in day-to-day reality. Obviously, then, God is unimportant to the universe for man. (2) With God in this position, man must assume God's quality of creativity. Man also disregards his situation or his estrangement, and therefore his sin. This state he believes is right and natural.

Man believes his present state is good with the universe replacing God and man replacing Christ in the center of the universe.¹⁵ But this situation is experienced by man in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life.¹⁶ This experience we would expect to be expressed in one way or another in television content and in viewers' reactions to it. For example, James Sellers suggests the mass media may approach the categories of finitude (described above), in this way:

(1) excite anxiety about the category beyond what existed --then offer an "answer" to it; (2) offer to allay existing anxiety; (3) accept anxiety but offer a means of courageous acceptance of it; (4) equate anxiety and despair.¹⁷

The study of this experience of man has given theology a new understanding of the "demonic-tragic structures" of individual and social life. Thus a new appreciation of existentialism has developed. Existentialism, while in industrial society, protests against its demonic-tragic structures. Existentialism sees man

¹⁵Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶Tillich, Systematic . . ., op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁷James E. Sellers, The Outsider and the Word of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 147.

as being dehumanized, empty, meaningless, and estranged by present society. It sees him as ceasing truly to encounter reality; reality does not "speak to him any longer." Man sometimes attempts to avoid this meaninglessness by limiting himself to just a part of reality. This neurotic form of escape is lived by submitting to what the culture demands and by repressing the question of meaning raised in the categories of his finitude.¹⁸ Contemporary cultural works (some of them on TV) express these destructive trends for the most part in a protesting way which makes them theologically significant.¹⁹

Thus language which expresses ultimate being and meaning is religious language. TV content, therefore, which is honest and true to its time may be religious. In these depth filled cultural expressions religious questions are being asked and being given expression.²⁰

Theology's new understanding of man's cultural style has clarified the overall question being asked in today's cultural expressions. In the Reformation the question of a merciful God and the forgiveness of sins was raised. In the early Greek church it was the question of finitude of death and error. Tillich asserts that today's question is neither of the above questions nor that of personal religion or the Christianization of culture and society. Today's question is ". . . the question

¹⁸Tillich, Theology of . . ., op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 47.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 47-49.

of a reality in which the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome, a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning, and hope."²¹

This reality Tillich calls the "new being." It is based on Paul's concept of the "new creation" (Galatians 6:15, II Corinthians 5:17). The New Being has the power to overcome the ". . . demonic cleavages of the 'old reality' in soul, society, and universe."²²

The Christian message in summary for our time is the message of the New Being. This message answers the question implied in today's predicament. The New Being may be seen in, is manifest in, Jesus the Christ, which from the Christian viewpoint is the subject of an ultimate concern.²³ God, then, through Jesus Christ, is the subject of an ultimate concern. All other gods are less than valid objects of an ultimate concern because of a new reality that Jesus brought into man's predicament, yet keeping his unity with God.²⁴

The New Being in Jesus is the overall norm and the criterion for the evaluation of television content and reactions via the viewer. The message of God through Jesus provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence as they may be seen in the cultural expression of TV. These answers come

²¹Tillich, Systematic . . ., op. cit., p. 49.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Tillich, Theology of . . ., op. cit., p. 11.

from the revelatory events on which Christianity is based. "They are 'spoken' to human existence from beyond it. Otherwise they would not be answers, for the question is human existence itself."²⁵ These answers, theological concepts which are derived from the Christian faith, are correlated with the analysis of the cultural expression of television content as reacted to and seen by the viewer.²⁶

It is the task of the church to respond to the ultimate questions being asked by culture in its contemporary expressions. One way of doing this, Tillich suggests, is through evangelism, showing people outside of the church that the symbols in which the life of the church is expressed point to answers to the questions they are asking. This is one of the objectives of this dissertation, to correlate the questions of TV with the answers of the Christian message. The Christian message can then heal estrangement and point to the ground and meaning of life.²⁷ The smug, complacent and prideful spirit of society can be undercut by the church exposing the demonic element, yet listening to the prophetic voices in cultural expressions such as TV. In this way the church speaks to the culture and the culture speaks to the church.

The revealed Christian message may then be communicated

²⁵ Tillich, Systematic . . ., op. cit., p. 64.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

²⁷ Tillich, Theology of . . ., op. cit., p. 50.

". . . as a message of man understanding his own predicament. By showing the structures of anxiety, of conflicts, of guilt as being in man,"²⁸ he may be confronted and may seek the answer in the New Being. As Tillich says:

Our answers must have as many forms as there are questions, and situations, individual and social. But there is one thing perhaps which will be common to all our answers if we answer in terms of the Christian message. The Christian message of a new Reality in which we can participate and which gives us power to take anxiety and despair upon ourselves.²⁹

This power to take anxiety and despair upon ourselves is the "courage to be." This is done by faith in Jesus as the Christ. When this answer is given and received the anxiety of time is overcome by affirming the present. The anxiety of space is conquered with security by accepting it as it is. Causality is accepted in dependence. The threat of losing individual and general substance is included in the courageous affirmation of the finite.³⁰

The "exposure" and the "listening" in order to aid in communicating this courage proceeds now in the next chapter by evaluating TV viewing through Tillich's method described above.

²⁸Ibid., p. 204.

²⁹Ibid., p. 208.

³⁰Tillich, Systematic . . ., op. cit., pp. 192-197.

CHAPTER VI

AN EVALUATION OF TELEVISION VIEWING BY PROGRAM TYPES

In this chapter a correlation is made between the theological concepts which are derived from the Christian message and the data derived from analyses of specific television content as reacted to and seen by the viewer. This evaluation will deal with:

1. What viewers watch (content)
 - a. What they view explicitly.
 - b. What they view implicitly.
2. The effects of and motivations for viewing what is watched.

These two main considerations will be related to the five program types, including the narrower groupings, listed in Chapter III. The chapter will conclude with the activity of television viewing related to the viewer's role as a parent, worker, and citizen.

I. LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

Whether in time or number of programs, most of television's broadcasting schedule is taken up by light entertain-

ment.¹ Programs such as comedy-variety, action, light movies, light drama, sports, and light music, in that order, are what viewers are mainly offered. These programs compose almost two-thirds of all programs broadcasted.²

Viewers take all of the light entertainment programing they can get, i.e. they favor these programs. Unless they are among the well-educated, their reaction is "They aren't great, but they're all right." Most of TV's programs are not creative, imaginative, different, new, original, tasteful, artistic, serious, significant, or great, but viewers do feel they are honest and entertaining. Viewers do feel that programs should have more of these qualities just mentioned, but only if the programs can also be entertaining. It would seem that viewers "want to have their cake and eat it too."³

Viewers do not seem to want to be stimulated by serious programing when they watch TV. For the most part they want pleasant relaxation. This is true at whatever educational or age level.⁴ This fact suggests that with slight differences the audience may be more truly a "mass" audience than originally thought by many TV critics. For example, the higher educated do not seem to admit to having the more light and entertaining programs as favorites. But in fact, they do have them as

¹Gary A. Steiner, The People Look At Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 165.

²Ibid., p. 164.

³Ibid., pp. 116-124.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

favorites! Apparently, it is not thought by them to be the accepted norm.

Programs, of course, have different meanings to different people. But it is revealing to discover similarities in program selection, meanings, and definitions. Again programs are usually selected as they agree with the viewer's opinions and values. So programs selected may reflect an image of the viewer rather than cause it. Sorting out cause and effect is most difficult. Mostly TV programs do not seem to affect the viewer as much as reflect him and his culture.

Comedy-Variety

Of all the programs offered, those that have made people laugh seem to have made the most lasting impression.⁵ Viewers like comics and comical situations. It might be thought that special programs would be most remembered. But surveyed viewers most frequently mention such programs as "I Love Lucy," "Sid Caesar," "Jackie Gleason," "Arthur Godfrey," "Father Knows Best," "The Honeymooners," "Milton Berle," and "December Bride."⁶ This confirms the way viewers most often approach TV viewing--i.e., as pleasant, light, and relaxing.

The viewer is often physically, emotionally, and mentally tired at the end of his day, ready for programs which will not tax him in any way. He desires to escape his problems in the fanciful world of comedy or other fictional situations. However,

⁵Ibid., p. 153.

⁶Ibid.

he not only views these types of programs on week nights but most often on weekends also. The question may be raised, do such programs provide temporary relief from the realities of life, including the anxieties created by finitude, in order to attack them with renewed strength, or do such programs attempt permanently to repress these problems? The programs themselves may be thought of as providing relaxation, but when does relaxation become an unrealistic mode of life?

Explicit content. We have included in this category of comedy-variety such program types as family situation, stand up or star comedian, comedy-variety specials and adult cartoons. These program types explicitly all communicate some humor and comic action. Comedy appears to give distraction, or escape from things as they are (excluding satire). Much of TV comedy therefore is explicitly undemanding, relaxing, and diverting. It seems to make events appear to be of no real significance or consequence. The plot is usually simple and easily grasped by young and old.⁷

Family situation shows give variety, some realism and surprise. The families appear to be "typical and normal," with mild emotional problems and easy solutions. For example, "Father Knows Best" seems to convey how ordinary people can

⁷Ibid., p. 174; W. Lloyd Warner in Ira O. Glick, Living With Television (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962), p. 117.

solve problems.⁸

Situation shows, not explicitly dealing with family problems, seem even less demanding and characters more stereotyped. For example, the long-time favorite, "I Love Lucy," is composed of a simple straight story with straight lines and answers making gags. The playlet is thus made humorous.⁹

The one-time television comedy situation series, "The Goldbergs," illustrates the use of stereotypes. The program showed its characters as being "typically Jewish."

The current (1963-64) most popular show on television with "Number 1 rating" is the "Beverly Hillbillies." An estimated 49.5 million, or better than 65% of the viewers watch the program each week. Richard Whorf, the show's director, explains the show's success: "One of the basic reasons is that we have a bigger appeal than most shows--ours is a show for children and for adults. The Hillbillies are lovable people, and that's our basis for popularity."¹⁰

Other surveys confirm the Hillbillies' overwhelming popularity with viewers of all ages.¹¹ The characters of the

⁸Glick, op. cit., p. 118.

⁹Stan Opotowsky, TV The Big Picture (New York: P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 119.

¹⁰Bard Lindeman and Alan Patureau, "Television Ratings On Trial," The Saturday Evening Post, (February 8, 1964), 13.

¹¹Paul A. Witty, "A Summary of Yearly Studies of Tele-viewing--1949-1963," Elementary English, (October, 1963), 591.

show are prime examples of stereotyping while the plot demonstrates a contrived situation.

The show was deliberately designed for mass taste with four main "plain folk" characters. (Remember, viewers like to think of themselves as "common" or "plain folk.") There is a widowed father, "Jed," on whose Ozark land a rich oil deposit was discovered. The oil brought him and his family to Beverly Hills luxury. The rest of the family occasionally get upset with him but he is looked to for "backwoods" philosophy and humor. "Seeing a backless sundress, for example, Jed says, 'I wouldn't let no son o'mine wear it.'"¹²

Ellie May is Jed's tomboy daughter with "a seductive drawl." In the show, she ". . . bathes in lye soap, applies judo to suitors intent on kissing her hand, slides down banisters and once used a brassiere as a double-barreled slingshot."¹³ The character seems similar to Daisy Mae of Al Capp's cartoon strip "Li'l' Abner."

Ellie's cousin Jethro is depicted as strong and handsome, but not too smart. He also has a sister called Jethrine.

The mother of the show is "Granny." "When she's not tending to her corn-liquor still, she whiles away her TV time cooking up grits and hog jowls or adapting to western civilization. . . . She also spoons out a mash of rural homilies."¹⁴

¹²Richard W. Lewis, "The Golden Hillbillies," The Saturday Evening Post, (February 2, 1963), 32.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Another situation comedy featured on TV has been the show, "Going My Way," a series based on the Academy Award-winning 1944 movie by the same name. Gene Kelly portrayed "Father Chuck O'Malley," the program's stereotyped Roman Catholic priest. The weekly offering was designed to be non-sectarian with members of other faiths included in the story lines. Kelly, in describing the show, said:

In one sequence I'm playing golf with a Protestant minister friend of mine. . . . He tries to cross me up by asking the Lord to bless the ball before he hits it. To which I caution him: 'No outside help, please.' It's that kind of series. . . . We are really having fun making this series."¹⁵

Stand up or star comedian shows center on a certain performer. For example, the long-familiar Bob Hope is widely accepted by audiences. His routines include laughing at himself, a flippancy air and egocentricity. He is cynical, using contemporary gags.¹⁶

Red Skelton explicitly communicates a classic kind of slapstick with wide appeal. Skelton plays a number of different clownlike and fool-like characters who get into dangerous and absurd situations but always come out of them uninjured. He appears to be the "duped innocent," yet uncorrupted in our complex and sophisticated world. He is viewed as a simple and natural human being.¹⁷ Similar communication could be seen with

¹⁵Gene Kelly quoted by Paul Henniger, "Kelly: Going His Way?" TV Times (September 30, 1962), 1.

¹⁶Glick, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁷Ibid.

slight variations in other comedians, such as Jack Benny, Sid Caesar, and Jackie Gleason.

Variety shows (e.g., Ed Sullivan) are entertaining in the vaudeville or circus tradition. Specific talents and personalities either perform their special roles or simply make a "guest appearance." Often these shows are musical, lively, good-humored, and have some unexpected occurrence.¹⁸

Implicit content. We have been discussing the surface, explicit content of TV comedy-variety programs. Now let us look below the appearances. The comical situations and actions seen seem to be light, of little consequence, and unreal. But comedy often shows deeper meanings to the viewer.

Family situation shows give simple solutions to ordinary people's problems. But implicitly such programs also remind viewers of problems in bringing up children, family life, and neighborhood social relations. Implicitly there is a simple moral in such shows. These morals are often thought by male viewers to be feminine values; i.e., the programs' family orientation is thought to be of primary concern to women more than men. Men watch such programs but not as much as women and children.¹⁹

Simple situation programs; e.g., "Beverly Hillbillies," "Goldbergs," "I Love Lucy," etc., also have specific implications.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 120-121.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 119.

The heavy reliance upon stereotypes implies preconceived and generalized attitudes regarding persons of various religious, ethnic or racial groups or locales. For example, Jews are depicted as overweight and noisy, and Negroes as lazy. However, until recently TV has been so sensitive to the Negro image that Negro actors have difficulty in finding jobs.²⁰

The characters in situation shows may have many meanings. The "Beverly Hillbillies," for example, may have developed some widely accepted common symbols. Jed Clampett may be seen as a "father image" identifying with older viewers. Ellie May symbolizes the innocent and virtuous, yet sexy and seductive ideal American girl that teen-age boys desire and teen-age girls desire to emulate.

Ellie's Cousin Jethro provides the desire for the girls and the identity for the boys. He is implicitly sexy in his build and feats of strength, yet he is attractive in his gentleness and consideration. He is also smart by "hill-country standards" but not "too" smart.

Granny provides the mother figure in the show, giving the viewer-mother the identity of arbitrator, midwife and ". . . the accumulated wisdom of self-sufficient generations."²¹

²⁰ Charles Winick, Taste and the Censor in Television (An Occasional Paper on the role of the mass media in the Free Society. New York: The Fund for the Republic, Inc., 1959), p. 19.

²¹ Lewis, op. cit., p. 32.

The implication is that these are "common" people like you and me. They have fulfilled our material wishes by striking it rich and living in luxury; they are "successful," so we can enjoy what they do and have vicariously.

In a situation comedy involving the use of "religious" characters, it is virtually precluded that religion will be presented humorously and in a non-sectarian manner. Such programs undoubtedly have varied implications. While it is implied that priests and ministers are human, there may also be the implication that "non-sectarian" content means the differences are only a matter of dress. Religion in such a context further implies that it is light and fun.

As was shown in the chapter on effects, TV personalities symbolize stature, prestige and esteem to the viewer. This may build up over the years. For example, Bob Hope's explicit qualities are techniques of comedy which do not reveal his implicit meaning to viewers. Implicitly Hope symbolizes the American qualities of generosity and moral goodness. Even though his material may be poor, it is not his fault. Being himself is more important than what he says on his show. Because he makes his jokes at himself or "groups that don't matter (e.g., Russians,)" rather than his audience's faults, he is popular. He may seem flippant explicitly, but implicitly he is sincere, well-meaning, a father and citizen.²²

²²Glick, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

Though Red Skelton plays the fool and the clown explicitly, viewers feel he privately is humble and honest. He raises the viewer's feelings of compassion and childishness.²³

Variety shows imply little physical, intellectual, or emotional effort on the part of the viewer while allowing him the fantasy of closeness to the entertainer. The implication is that boredom is relieved and relaxation is achieved through the constant change in acts and presentations. Controversy is avoided with little questionable moral material presented. Thus the program is "safe" for the whole family. This blandness implies more the feminine cultural norm rather than the masculine. The appeal, then, is more to women, children and older people, rather than to most men.²⁴

Effects and motivations. First, TV comedy aids the viewer in "dealing" with life. It can do this in at least two ways:
1. by escape from reality, or fantasy, or 2. by insight for dealing with anxieties of life.

In either case, comedy has the effect of releasing deep impulses (e.g., aggressive feelings), while rendering them harmless by seeming to deny their power and force.²⁵ There is a cathartic effect on the viewer whether TV comedy makes him more or less consciously aware of his anxieties.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 120-121.

²⁵Ibid., p. 117.

Escapist content includes material which is fantasy, since it presents an unreal picture of life.²⁶ The first effect of such material is definitely relaxation. Research has thoroughly documented this effect.²⁷ A mental and psychophysical respite from the tiring daily activities is provided.

Secondly, there seems to be the effect of vicarious interaction. Programs that involve people talking to each other become substitutes for real personal contact among viewers who may be alone. The family situation comedy, for example, may be substituted by a woman viewer in place of actually meeting someone and talking to him. Viewers who are alone feel a sense of participation, kinship and concern vicariously.²⁸

Since the viewer has a need not to feel alone, he or she selects escapist programs (e.g., comedy, daytime serial, etc.) and reacts to them to fulfill that need. It should be pointed out that the "viewer" may not actually be watching the program in order for this need to be met. The main concern seems to be just to have some social interaction taking place which can be heard while possibly doing something else, (e.g., washing dishes). Radio also serves this function.²⁹

A third effect of escapist comedy-variety content is its

²⁶ Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 203.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

contribution to the facilitation of social intercourse. In a relatively superficial way, programs which provide escape tend to give viewers topics for conversation. By discussing TV characters and/or situations, a viewer may engage in conversation with another person without getting too involved in a subject which could be considered controversial. For example, "Fred! Did you see Jackie Gleason's bicycle act Saturday night?"

Those viewers who are less formally educated or who are in rather heterogeneous groups tend to be restricted to less complex and controversial material in their conversation. Thus material which is light and escapist (comic strips, comical and daytime serial TV) and widely known serves as a means of social intercourse.³⁰

The effects which have just been described may not be caused by the content itself. In other words, the viewer may use the escape content to reinforce his existing needs, problems, and attitudes. For example, a viewer may choose to watch "Father Knows Best" to escape into the program's fictional situation rather than the program causing him to escape.³¹

There are, of course, other ways to escape reality and its accompanying anxieties. A person may choose to drink, sleep, or work. Viewers may watch TV rather than choose these other forms of escape. If they do, it may be due to the easy accessibility of the TV set. However, there seems to be no

³⁰ Ibid., p. 178.

³¹ Ibid., p. 197.

research on this. Some research has shown that viewers with various problems do tend to become addicted to TV escapist content.³²

So the effects of comedy-variety or any other escapist TV content which may be considered unchristian are not necessarily going to be diminished by the content itself being altered. Rather, the viewer's reasons and needs for watching escapist content need to be altered.³³

This fact would tend to invalidate TV critics' statement that viewing escape content habitually to avoid reality's anxieties and to release tensions, some undoubtedly caused by social problems, is likely to reduce social criticism by viewers. Escape type programs are also accused of causing social apathy because social problems are mainly not dealt with in such content. Consequently, the viewer does not become aware of social problems.³⁴

If the viewer is not socially apathetic before he watches an escapist program, research tends to show that he is not likely to be so after viewing. Though the already socially apathetic viewer may watch escapist content it is not likely it will make him more socially apathetic after viewing.³⁵ So again, the overall effect of escapist programs on most viewers is likely to be a reconfirmation of already existing attitudes, feelings and

³²Ibid., pp. 192-197.

³⁴Ibid., p. 198.

³³Ibid., pp. 196-197.

³⁵Ibid., p. 199.

opinions rather than changing them--although such programs do give a sense of relaxation from anxieties.

An evaluation. The explicit content of TV comedy-variety seems harmless in its message of fun, simplicity, relaxation and easy problem resolution.

The feeling that "other families are just like us" seems reassuring and gives a sense of participation. Identifying with characters in simple situation comedies also provides the viewer with the feeling "they are like me." Also, the presentation of "religious" comedy gives the explicit message that religion is light and entertaining. The comedian explicitly communicates a lovable and humorous personality.

Explicitly then, TV comedy gives a relaxing respite from the day's problems and worries. Surely, it would seem, it is not unchristian to relax and laugh in a recognized fanciful world of comedy. The ultimate questions appear to be only temporarily avoided in such a world. But are they?

When we look at how the viewer sees the implicit nature of the content we discover that the ultimate questions are not in reality avoided and that fantasy is not always recognized as such.

The situations shown are indeed depicted as being light. But they do not show the audience that in reality such situations are not light. They do not show the viewer that the reason he is laughing is because the situation is not in accord with reality

or is ironic, etc. The comical situations are not usually satirical in nature. Rather, they indicate that what is depicted is true to life.

Further, the oversimplified, stereotyped characters, the "they are like me" characters or the "that's the way they really are" characters are not true to life. This reduction of man to simple types does not do justice to each person's uniqueness or his relation to God in the Christian view.

This oversimplification of life's situations and people strikes as anxiety of causality. The anxiety appears to be resolved, not in facing life's complexities and being dependent upon God for the answers to the question of meaning. Rather, the self-sufficient characters solve life's problems. The dependence upon God and the courage to accept this aspect of finitude is attempted to be avoided. The simple moral messages implicit in situation comedies avoid the realistic complexities of good and evil by black and white problems and answers. The simplicity of such messages gives a false security to the categories of finitude.

By identifying with the material success of fictional characters who seem to be "common folk," the anxiety of substance also appears to be avoided or overcome. This is the anxiety over losing material wealth or status. The acquisition of objects gives a false sense of permanence and solidity, appearing to overcome the aspect of finitude of the passing of all things. The self-identity of the viewer seems to be

maintained through the identity with the character and he with the substance of his material or social success. Social success is shown further in the prestige and status given to star comedians like Hope and Skelton. Their lasting stature may imply the security of social status and agelessness. Their "space" seems unchangeable and the viewer wishes it was his.

Again the courage of affirming the finite nature of things and persons is avoided. The picture is presented of secure permanence of substance and space in self-sufficiency. The effects of most TV comedy undoubtedly result in temporary release of tension, etc. caused by the viewer's anxiety of finitude. But avoidance of true insight into life's problems via the vehicle of humor and comedy sends the viewer back to life without true answers to his ultimate questions regarding meaning or indeed without his even asking questions.

The effect of a sense of interaction with others through the substitute of TV "conversation" seems most tragic. One can recall Reisman's The Lonely Crowd, in thinking of persons who yearning for fellowship and dialogue, turning to the poor substitute of a fictional TV program containing conversation. The face to face contact of person with person cannot be substituted by a TV set. The set does not respond. The set does not care. The need for such persons to be involved in true Christian fellowship is only too obvious and suggests the church's responsibility to attract such persons from the fanciful world of TV escapism and its temporary vicarious and false sense of

participation to the real world of courage, being, and concern.

Light comedy shows provide a basis for conversation with others. Like the weather it often gives an opening; a "breaking of the ice" in meeting and talking with another person. But surely a person does not have to be highly educated to venture into the deeper levels of conversation and social intercourse. True concern for and participation in another person's life and he in yours requires more than a continual agreement on and recalling of light TV content. Such participation requires a sharing of concerns and understanding deeper than that presented in a TV comedy show.

As was stated in the section on effects, TV comedy (or any TV escape content) is more used by the viewer to meet his needs than it causes those needs. We ought therefore evaluate the content as to whether or not it meets those needs, the anxieties caused by finitude from the Christian viewpoint. The true point of evaluation then, again, is the viewer and his use of the content more than the content itself. Of course, the content contributes often intentionally, to what the viewer "desires" but it is not the main focus.

It should finally be pointed out that though most TV comedy is similar to what we have been discussing, there are occasional shows (e.g., "That Was the Week that Was," or satirical dramas and comedians) which truly aid the viewer in dealing with his ultimate questions. Such comedy and humor give insight while still being entertaining. A human situation is

presented as being funny explicitly, but implicitly it also reveals a truth or irony of life. Ben Shahn describes it this way:

Humor itself is not--never was jocularity. Humor is a way of feeling about life, and when humor is great it is almost never without one of its opposite moods--tenderness, tragedy, concern for man's condition, recognition of man's frailties, and sympathy with his idealism.³⁶

Comedy does not have to avoid life as it is in order to be funny. The tragic and the comic go together. They both ask the ultimate questions and may even point to Christian answers. The latter is even rarer than the former in TV comedy. But the mere fact that it is occasionally present on TV suggests that it is feasible. Jim Crane, a cartoonist, suggests qualities needed by the Christian viewer and comedy show performers when he describes his own cartoon work:

To laugh when someone approaches an exposed nerve requires courage and a willingness to face life with open eyes. It also requires sufficient skill and taste on the part of the artist to maintain just enough detachment, a quality difficult to achieve.³⁷

Panel, Games, and Light Quiz

Explicit content. Programs in this category of light entertainment involve real persons rather than fictional characters.

³⁶Ben Shahn in Jim Crane, "Little World in Crisis: A Tragicomic Caricature," in Finley Eversole, ed., Christian Faith and Contemporary Arts, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 218-221.

³⁷Ibid., p. 221.

The master of ceremonies is usually an attractive, kind, generous, and cheerful man.³⁸ Participants are amateurs, unless they are the panel members or it is stated that they are professionals. These amateurs usually receive rewards not considered standard professional payment.³⁹ The programs thus appear to present real persons like the viewer having fun, testing their wits and skills, sharing their personalities, and receiving token rewards.

Celebrities and show business people are used exclusively in some shows. Though such programs (e.g., "Stump The Stars," "Pantomime Quiz," and "I've Got A Secret") have a quiz show format, they often present more of a variety show. The celebrities joke and in other ways perform informally.⁴⁰

One game show featuring amateurs has been very successful. "Queen for a Day" has been broadcasted for nearly twenty years.⁴¹ Members of the audience write down and submit their problems and why they feel they should be selected "Queen." Contestants are then selected to tell their problems to the TV audience. The studio audience applauds for the most deserving. The winner is crowned "Queen for a Day," receiving many prizes including one designed to solve her problem. Jack Bailey, the show's owner and master of ceremonies, knows just how to make contestants' miseries exciting to viewers. He says:

³⁸Glick, op. cit., p. 129.

³⁹Ibid., p. 128.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 130.

⁴¹Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 152.

No blind people and no cripples--no crutches. . . . If you allow them on, you might just as well throw away the other contestants. They would always win. So in fairness, we don't pick them.⁴²

Implicit content. These programs are usually entertaining. But they also imply a sense of participation on the part of the viewer; a face-to-face meeting with the contestant.⁴³ The implication of prize and quiz shows is that the contestant, being an average person, could be the viewer. The viewer could be the person testing his knowledge meeting stars and receiving prizes on the show (e.g., "Password").⁴⁴ The implication of the kind and benevolent master of ceremonies is that he is this way in actual life.⁴⁵

These shows appeal mainly to working-class housewives. They imply that ordinary people's problems can be solved in a glamorous, yet real context.

The shows imply a world of mature women who can relax and be giggling girls again under the stimulating good humor of the master of ceremonies. The viewers can revel in a feeling of material relief and gratification, and this appeal is not limited to older women. . . .⁴⁶

The main implication of shows employing stars and celebrities is that such people have a good time and are "underneath it all" ordinary people. They further imply that the

⁴²Jack Bailey in Ibid.

⁴³Glick, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 129.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

viewer can look in on how the celebrities really behave and the kind of persons they truly are.⁴⁷

Effects and motivations. There is little doubt viewers like quiz panel, and audience participation shows. Such programs as "\$64,000 Question" and "Twenty-One" frequently are still referred to as viewers' favorites. These programs rate high with viewers to be put back on the air!⁴⁸ This is particularly surprising in view of the "quiz scandals" in the late 1950s. The shows which remain popular are specifically those shows which were discontinued due to their dishonest methods.

The effect of the exposes of such respected contestants as Charles Van Doren ("Twenty-One") was shock on the part of the viewers. But the "reality" of the shows (i.e., viewer identification, wish fulfillment, etc.) does not seem to have been threatened. It would appear the sponsors knew the viewers' motivations and attitudes well. The shows were fixed in order to keep their ratings high. The sponsors felt the viewer did not just want to see a contestant win or lose, but wanted to root for him or against him.⁴⁹ So sponsors designed the shows to have villains and heroes, instituting the plot of TV westerns and wrestling in which the villain loses and the hero wins. The quiz-show producers thus looked

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁸ Steiner, op. cit., pp. 380, 151.

⁴⁹ Opatowsky, op. cit., pp. 278-279.

upon it all as show business. The deception seemed no worse than those in commercials or trick photography. Even though contestants lost, they were paid and of course the viewer was entertained.⁵⁰

Polls taken after the scandals were publicized indicated that the public was not too alarmed by it all.⁵¹ This may be due to the fact that viewers are aware of the show-business aspects of television, but like it anyway. It may also indicate a cultural breakdown in morality. In either case, the shows do not have to be real. They merely need to seem as though they were! The effects are the same: wish fulfillment, illusions of being celebrities and solving real-life problems with prizes.

An evaluation. Serious quiz shows will be discussed later. Here we have been concerned with "light" quiz, panel and audience participation shows.

The desire to test wits and learn from questions asked contestants seems to be a wholesome and reality-centered activity. The desire to help those in need, those with problems, also seems to be a worthwhile undertaking. These activities would certainly be in keeping with Christian standards of stewardship of time, mind, and money. But the research shows that the intention of the producer, the motivation of the viewer and the resultant effects tend to negate such values. For example, when contestants are seen easily to solve their problems through the mere acqui-

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 286.

sition of prizes on a quiz show, and when the viewer identifies with this, he is accepting unreal answers to real problems. He is attempting to solve the anxiety of space and substance by escaping into the false solution of the TV prize winner. The viewer further seems to be unaware of the happenings following the show. The contestant is usually still facing his problems while the Internal Revenue Department seizes much of the prize value.

The question also must be asked, is the viewer motivated to watch another person's suffering on a quiz or audience participation show by personal compassion and concern or by impersonal curiosity and entertainment? The producers believe it is the latter and there is evidence to show they are right. The exploitation of persons' problems for entertainment purposes certainly is deplorable from the Christian view of man. To "pay off" any guilt of watching another's misery by a few prizes does not overcome the disvalue of the loss of dignity or the viewer's loss of compassion and concern. In such a situation the viewer may have feelings of both "egoism" (excessive self-concern involving vanity, pride, sense of power or importance), and altruism. To the extent the former is present in the viewer's motivations for watching such programs it can be said that sin is present.⁵² For in attempting to overcome the anxieties of his

⁵² Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 133, 118.

finitude the viewer attempts to make himself different from whom God intended him to be. Indeed in such a case, the viewer is attempting to avoid the question of being altogether.

Viewing celebrities as real and ordinary persons on TV is both reality and fantasy when they participate in panel or quiz programs (interview shows may be seen differently). That celebrities enjoy games and have fun like other persons is reality. But to believe that one is getting a "sneak" or inside look at how they really live is fantasy. The TV image of a celebrity may be true but often it is presented as more glamorous than in real life.

With viewers constantly indulging in other forms of TV escapism, it seems unlikely that too many would prefer to believe that a quiz program is fixed. However, due to the quiz scandals, this may have changed. Nevertheless, the problem arises of accepting something broadcasted as true when it is not true.

Explicitly the "original" quiz shows were purported to be honest. The widespread rationalizations and exposure to the shows after the scandals demonstrate both viewers' and producers' acceptance of such dishonesty.⁵³ The extent of acceptance of fantasy as reality in programming through unrealistic "villain and hero" formats, even in quiz shows, is common in TV viewers! The viewers' ultimate questions thus either receive false answers

⁵³ See Meyer Weinberg, TV in America (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962) for further reading on Quiz Show scandals.

or no answers.

Light Drama

This category includes such program types as light and medium drama, daytime serials, personal "real life" drama, courtroom enactments, or family relations. This kind of drama does not include such programs as "Playhouse 90," "Play of the Week," or other "serious" or "heavy" drama. Such programs will be discussed later. But even with this distinction, there are many programs that could be called "medium or heavy" drama, which might also be part of a continuing series in the "light-medium" category. For example, the "Richard Boone Show" was a series of plays adapted to or written for television. Some of these programs were light, while others dealt with a serious and heavy themes. Plays can deal with virtually any subject matter. But characteristically, they concentrate on plot and the skill of the actors to communicate their unfolding.⁵⁴ Very few offerings on TV fall exclusively into this category outside of "specials" and "movies." Most "dramatic" programs revolve around continuing vocational types (e.g., detectives, police, nurses, psychiatrists, M.D.s, lawyers, teachers, etc.), which fall in turn into different situation types (e.g., mystery, action, western, crime). It would seem more fruitful to postpone discussion of drama with serious themes until heavy drama is discussed and concentrate here on specific types of "light drama."

⁵⁴Glick, op. cit., p. 126.

Daytime serials, personal "real life" drama, courtroom enactments---family relations. Most of these programs appear on daytime TV. They include shows like "Love of Life," "Search for Tomorrow," "As the World Turns," "Divorce Hearing," "Edge of Night," "Day in Court," etc.

Because such shows appear on weekday TV, women, almost exclusively, are their viewers (especially older, middle class women).⁵⁵

Explicit content. The characters usually have very large problems to be solved in these shows. Most of these problems involve personal relations which are solved rather mechanically, but with some poetic justice.⁵⁶ These programs, adapted from earlier radio days, often show wealthy persons as having these large personal problems.

The fact that these "soap operas" continue week after week, indeed year after year, causes them to have repetitious plots and situations in which marital difficulties seem to predominate. The shows continue for long periods of time with the same characters. This limits the opportunities for the actors. But when an actor leaves the show or is ill the writers usually have simple remedies.

Actress Teal Ames played Sara Karr, the "upstanding wife

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 137.

⁵⁶Rudolph Arnheim in Klapper, op. cit., p. 170.

of racket-buster Mike Karr" in "The Edge of Night" series. Miss Ames wanted to leave the series to act in a Broadway show.

Leslie Lieber describes the show's solution to the problem:

The producers were willing, but wanted to find a believable exit for her. It wasn't easy. 'Arranging a divorce was out of the question', says a program official, 'because Sara Karr had always been a saintly, Joan of Arc sort of character.' So in a tragic and unforgettable episode, they killed Sara Karr by having her run down while saving her two-year-old daughter. Four thousand letters of condolence poured in.⁵⁷

Similar actor switches in soap operas make for confusing situations in the daily shows. For example, on "Love of Life," the wife poured her drunk husband into bed on the Friday show. The Monday episode opened with an entirely "new" husband rising in bed (an actor switch over the week-end). One daytime actor was a husband to two different women on two different shows on the same network!⁵⁸ But the daily five million viewers of these shows do not seem to be too bothered by these actor switches. Apparently they only get concerned when the character is "eliminated."

We have been speaking mainly of the daytime serial--"real life" drama type of show. There is some variation when we examine the courtroom enactment show. As we will see, there is much of the same content implicitly in the latter as in the former. We are not here including such shows as "Perry Mason"

⁵⁷Leslie Lieber, "Somebody Stole my Bride," Los Angeles Times, This Week, May 28, 1961, p. 9.

⁵⁸Ibid.

(mystery) or "The Defenders" (heavy drama) though these classifications are of course arbitrary. The courtroom enactment again presents persons, usually middle class, as appearing before a judge, with large problems. These problems also usually are of a personal relations nature.

Implicit content. The daily presentation of a daytime series of soap operas implies an ongoing relationship with the characters (as was illustrated above). There is the implication that the characters are friends and the viewer is getting an intimate look into their lives and problems.⁵⁹

It is implicit in the soap opera or courtroom scene that life can be worse for the viewer or the viewer can survive or overcome many problems.⁶⁰ These shows further imply that this is the way life is.

Implicitly the woman is the dominant person in the home. She must be steadfast and strong when such problems arise as illness, predatory women and weak husbands. In other words, anything which may threaten the "integrity" or sanctity of the home and family, the women must be prepared to fight. The appeal is thus mainly to working class women with feelings of inability to deal with upheavals or disorder.⁶¹

⁵⁹Glick, op. cit., p. 136.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 138.

Effects and motivations. As with other "escape" programming (e.g., comedy-variety-action-adventure), daytime serials seem to relax many viewers; i.e., they escape their daily problems by viewing someone else's.

The conversational nature of such shows, as with comedy-variety, also act as substitutes for personal, face-to-face socializing by many viewers. Also, the soap opera provides common conversational topics; e.g., Sara Karr's marital difficulties are discussed over "the back yard fence."⁶²

Daytime serials seem to give emotional release, and "help" and advice to women. Several different studies confirm these two effects.⁶³ The emotional release often comes in the opportunity to cry through identification with the characters, in enjoyment of the joyful and sad surprises provided, and in the knowledge that other persons have problems also.⁶⁴ In effect, comfort of one sort or another seems provided by such reactions. The comfort, however, often comes as escape from or compensation for the viewer's own problems. Some viewers even gain a sense of prestige from the programs. This is because the viewer's own problems are magnified and dramatized in those of the TV characters, giving the viewer a sense of superiority over others who do not have these emotional experiences.⁶⁵

⁶²Klapper, op. cit., pp. 171-178.

⁶³Ibid., p. 183.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 179.

⁶⁵Herta Herzog in Ibid., p. 180.

In addition to giving emotional release the soap operas appear to give help and advice. But research seems to show this to be somewhat superficial, often taking the form of just a "formula."⁶⁶

But the data also show that such "help and advice" decreases the housewife's feelings of futility in handling family affairs and also increases a sense of security or "comfort" - Warner and Henry found that one way this security is given is by the daytime serial providing ". . . moral beliefs, values, and techniques for solving emotional and interpersonal problems."⁶⁷ Security is also given by the program reaffirming the marriage ties, providing identification with the show's character's success in problem solving and the moral restraint which keeps one out of trouble.⁶⁸

An evaluation. As with comedy-variety, daytime serials provide escape. But they seem less fanciful than comedy-variety; they contain more realistic content. Though the plots are repetitious, they do deal with problems with which many women apparently can identify.

However, there are numerous unrealistic elements. Though Jesus said it would be harder for a rich man to enter heaven than

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 182.

⁶⁷W. Lloyd Warner and William E. Henry in Ibid., p. 188.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 188-189.

one who was not, he did not state the truth to flatter middle-class pride. For the soap operas to show a disproportionate number of wealthy persons with problems hardly appears really to "speak to" most viewers' common problems. Further, the various shuffling of characters and their rise or demise neither seems true to good dramatic form nor to life.

However, if through the implicit content and the effects of daytime serials, the role of the wife and mother is strengthened, it would seem that a constructive function is served. For example, if divorce is seriously rather than lightly treated and is shown as unfortunate as a general practice, while it may yet be redemptive in individual instances, the housewife as being socially and economically emancipated, or each member of the marital relationship accepted and respected as a person having sacred worth, then such programs would be in accord with Christian values. Rather than escape from the sin arising from man's misuse of his freedom, i.e., the problems which beset him, the courage to cope with them might be aided in the daytime serial.

But from the Christian viewpoint, we can not expect more than a minimal reinforcement of basic societal norms of the mother-wife role. We can expect less than the Christian norm of the "courage to be" when the programs are used as various forms of escape by the woman viewer (e.g., false security in simple solutions to family problems, identification with characters for purposes of pride in problems or for compensation of inability

to cope with problems, substitution for real face-to-face contact, etc.).

Action (Crime, Westerns, Adventure)

Next to comedy-variety the largest number of shows offered fall into the action category. Viewers watch about as much action programming as is offered.⁶⁹ But though they watch these programs they seem to feel guilty or at least uneasy about doing so. Viewers say there should be fewer crime and western shows. This seems to stem from the fact that there is too much violence on TV. Parents especially voice this complaint as they show their concern over their children's viewing habits. Without a doubt, the most frequent and serious question raised about TV by parents is "Does its violence teach children violence and crime?"⁷⁰ We will discuss the role of the parent viewer later.

But violence is not as easy to define as it at first might appear. Often violence is defined very broadly by groups counting the number of incidents which occur. For example, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters counted 6,868 violent incidents on TV in a test week. But they included such things as "sham," "threats," "legal" and "verbal" violence.⁷¹ Such definitions may broadly indicate the number of defined incidents

⁶⁹Steiner, op. cit., pp. 164, 167.

⁷⁰Wilbur Schramm, Television in the Lives of Our Children (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 170.

⁷¹Klapper, op. cit., p. 138.

but caution should be used in generalizing such statistics to an over-all picture of TV "violence."

The violence is usually tabulated from fictional shows (e.g., action types). Real violence in sports, news, weather, public issues and public events is often overlooked in statistical tallies of TV violence. There seems to be some indication that viewers do react differently to real and fictional violence, especially children.⁷²

In addition to the violence which is constant in most of these programs, the shows deal with problems of good and evil, law and justice, sex and pride. They contain elements of curiosity, action and discovery. A wide range of feelings and messages is thus presented and communicated. As might be expected, these programs appeal more to men than to women, though husband and wife usually watch them together.⁷³

The action category has been divided into three groups:

1. crime, dealing with detectives, police, and lawyers;
2. westerns, adult and general; and 3. adventure in this and "other" worlds.

A. Crime

This category includes content of crime dramas, "private eye"--sophisticated, police plots, detective, private eye and courtroom enactment shows.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 138, 139.

⁷³Steiner, op. cit., p. 177.

Explicit content. These shows deal with issues of good and evil and how justice, law and order finally triumph. Often justice is victorious by the main crime-solving character circumventing the conventional ways of authority.⁷⁴

Often there is suspense concerning what will be shown next or what the ultimate outcome will be. This element of suspense is usually then countered with action and an answer. Other programs have elements akin to suspense but tend to stress a more logical-intellectual approach, i.e., a puzzle to be solved with clues, logic, and insight.⁷⁵

The violence in these shows is usually associated with the action. Therefore shows which stress the "puzzle" element usually contain far less violence (e.g., "Perry Mason").

Implicit content. The implication of the crime-solver working outside of constituted authority seems to be that government and law work too slowly and are not as efficient in bringing about justice. Deciding for himself what is good or evil, the "private eye," for example, breaks the law so that good may be victorious. That the end justifies the means is often the implication.

A further implication seems to be that the individual is not powerless in today's massive and impersonal social structures and institutions. "Red tape" and "corrupt" and "inept"

⁷⁴Glick, op. cit., p. 122.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 123.

bureaucrats can be avoided by swift, sure and right individual action in the "American frontier" or "Robin Hood" traditions.⁷⁶

The popularity of these programs with men can be seen in the implication of the flattering of masculine pride. The leading crime-solver is usually of strong body, which is not hurt by drinking, smoking, or other more direct physical inflictions. Attractive women are usually attracted to him physically. But his interest in them is passing and light with no lasting commitment. The implication is that love and sexual relations are a light activity not to be taken seriously or else you will get "tied down" and have to give up the quest for exciting crime solving and the meting out of justice.

The action often shown in the act of retribution is usually longer than would be normally required to subdue a captive. Rather than regret the killing or maiming of the prejudged "wrongdoer," the crime-solving hero often seems to delight in the violence. Not only is there the implication that such physical skill is easy and enjoyable, but that it can be done with rapidity without feelings or a sense of spiritual or physical suffering.

Of course, also implied in the portrayal of the hero and villain is the fact that good and evil are white and black, clear and simple.

⁷⁶ Christopher La Farge, "Mickey Spillane and His Bloody Hammer," in Bernard Rosenberg, Mass Culture (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 176-185.

Occasionally the "criminal" (one who is portrayed explicitly as such) may have admirable characteristics such as cleverness, cunning, agility, attractiveness, intellect, etc. The implication is, even though he is finally brought to justice, that a person can commit criminal acts and be admired. It is further implied that the viewer can vicariously participate in crime without feeling guilty due to the just ending.⁷⁷

Effects and motivations. By identifying with the hero the viewer may identify with what the hero implies.

In shows stressing suspense and mystery, feelings of foreboding and anticipation seem to be aroused. The viewer becomes anxious about the unexpected, wishing for some alleviation. With action and an answer given, this feeling seems to be relieved.

When the show stresses a form of a puzzle, curiosity and intellectual challenge are aroused. Satisfaction is given in the intellectual solution by cleverly fitting together the clues and logic.⁷⁸

There seems to be some evidence that shows with extreme suspense leading to some inevitable action seem to hold the attention of the viewer with ambivalent feelings. The viewer knows that some terror will occur but desperately hopes that it will not occur. Levy and Glick attribute the motivation to watch

⁷⁷John W. Bachman, The Church in the World of Radio-Television (New York: Association Press, 1960), p. 84.

⁷⁸Glick, op. cit., p. 123.

such a program to ". . . a wish to be overwhelmed by some dark inner or outer force and to survive the awful knowledge that comes with it."⁷⁹

Viewers may watch crime shows in order to discover what may occur in real life when deep feelings of their personalities are released. These are feelings which are ordinarily kept in check by social conformity. Through the fantasy world of the crime show the viewer may be able vicariously to resolve his negative feelings against demands imposed upon him.⁸⁰ The viewer may identify with the feelings shown on the program but not actually act upon them. Again, as was pointed out in implicit content, the viewer may experience to some degree the aggressive-ness, hostility, and other negative and destructive feelings without a sense of guilt or actual harm occurring.

Here, as with comedy-variety, soap opera, and other various program types, there is escapism. However, the fictional situations and characters seem to provide emotional release and give some simple solutions to problem situations. Thus the programs may be related in part to reality by venting real emotions. But the same criticisms applied to previous types of escapism seem to apply here.

It should also be stated that studies dealing with adults' reactions to crime and violence are very limited and do not seem

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

to go much beyond that which has just been stated.⁸¹

An evaluation. The Christian affirms that he lives in an orderly universe with laws instituted by God. For an individual to redress wrongs on his own before exhausting established laws is to promote chaos, disorder and anarchy. The crime show hero does not attempt constructively to change inept law enforcement; rather he "takes matters into his own hands." Law for the Christian living in God's ordered universe, is in accord with the freedom of the majority and thus the individual in an imperfect world. To suggest distrust and suspicion for the law is to promote freedomlessness, self-interest and ultimately, lovelessness. For the Christian, justice, freedom, order, and law come from love. God is love for the Christian. In certain times and places there may be no other alternative for the Christian, after exhausting legal means, but to break the laws with full expectation of paying the penalty. Yet laws in general are assumed to be just in the Christian view.

For a hero and a viewer who positively identifies with him to judge for himself what is right and wrong and so easily correct the situation outside of the law suggests that the anxiety of causality is overcome, i.e., that man is self-sufficient without the aid of the law or God. This by definition is sin in the Christian view.

Impersonalness, i.e., treating man as less than a child

⁸¹Klapper, op. cit., p. 144.

of God or treating a person as a thing is wrong in the Christian view. But the direct action of the crime show hero may express the concern and frustration of many persons today who feel lost in their mechanistic and technological culture. The hero is an individual not crushed by the oppressive, impersonal forces around him. The ultimate question of man's existence is thus being asked in the desire for acceptance as a person of value in contemporary society. It is a negative example (i.e., crime show hero) to be sure, but the element of the courage to be, the fight for self identity, is Christian.

But if the stereotyped hero symbolizes individualism he also symbolizes masculine pride. Here again such pride suggests man's attempt to overcome the anxiety of his finitude by making himself better than he really is.

The self-sufficiency implied in the masculine pride portrayed by the hero is further seen in the unrealistic and unchristian man-woman relationships presented. The hero's passing enjoyment of physical relations with seductive women shows the woman not as a person of spiritual worth but a toy to be played with temporarily. The implication seems to be a naturalistic idea of sex, viewing man as just a highly developed animal. Of course, all of this has to be mostly by suggestion and innuendo. For ironically there are strict taboos in the various but vague TV codes and laws. The codes give a false asceticism, appearing to play down sex life in TV programs.⁸²

⁸²Winick, op. cit., p. 10.

But the sexual relationship portrayed in the crime-drama and elsewhere on TV implies love is simply sexual desire with the loved one being just an object of desire to be possessed. Love then becomes a diversion and sexual practices ends in themselves.⁸³ Sex as related to the whole fulfillment of personality and responsible partnership is missing when either false asceticism or sexual naturalism are portrayed on TV.

Sex is God-given shamelessly to man, who is both physical and spiritual. Sex involves men and women at deep levels of personality in responsible mutuality. When this is absent in TV content involving sex it may be termed evil or wrong, regardless of codes or anthropologists. It is also wrong, however, simply to censor material because sex is involved. Indeed, there may well not be enough sex on TV. For sex to be presented in its proper perspective as a part of the fulfillment of life would dispel much ignorance and communicate a truer picture of reality. It would also provide a freer flow of communication while allowing the broadcaster opportunities for more creative programing.

The attempt to overcome the anxiety of space is present in the portrayal of the hero's indestructible nature. Despite bullet wounds and fist fights the hero preserves his body and his "space" seems secure. The irony is that these attempts to overcome this anxiety appear to be courageous but in the Christian view they

⁸³Walter G. Muellder, Foundations of the Responsible Society (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 78; F. Thomas Trotter, "Mass Culture and Christian Values," Christian Action, 16 (January, 1961), 49.

are not.

Though there is no direct research on adults' reactions to violence, indirectly they are affected in their roles as parents, as we shall see later. But in just evaluating the content alone, some observations may be made. The violence portrayed oversimplifies good and evil; an either-or situation. Further, more persons are maimed or killed with such ease that suffering and the value of human life are seen as being cheap and devoid of emotion. This causes a distorted picture of actual life.

Senate committees have investigated this and have only recommended that the industry decide for itself.⁸⁴

Whether or not there is "scientific" evidence to support the objections to violence does not alter the immorality of it being broadcasted under the guise of "entertainment" presented usually as drama in such a way as to imply real life situations.⁸⁵

For persons to be maimed and killed with such rapidity and emotionlessness not only overlooks real suffering when this actually occurs, but cheapens man's love of man and the value of each human life. This is made even worse when it is done in the name of law and justice.

The Christian religion recognizes that in an imperfect world, there are not usually going to be clear choices of good or evil. To oversimplify the choices sacrifices such Christian

⁸⁴Winick, op. cit., p. 8.

⁸⁵Herbert A. Bloch and Frank T. Flynn, Delinquency (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 212.

values as humility, grace and freedom.

In the Christian view, justice is a part of love. Violence does not accomplish full justice. "The great affirmation in Zechariah 4:6 characterizes the witness of biblical faith toward the futility of ultimate reliance upon force. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.'"⁸⁶

Whether the viewer escapes his real world with its problems of finitude into the fantasy of the TV crime show or attempts to abstract solutions to apply to reality he will not be successful from the Christian viewpoint. The escape is only temporary, partial, and unrealistic. The answers to problems presented are oversimplified. Many of the values presented are implicitly unchristian. Whatever catharsis which may be experienced (vicariously experiencing negative feeling without guilt, etc.) might be outweighed by the fact that the cause of such destructive feelings is not realistically being explored.

More positive Christian values may be seen in some courtroom enactment programs (e.g., "Sam Benedict," "The Law and Mr. Jones," "The Defenders"). These programs, showing only violence germane to the plot, often stress the complexities and inconsistencies of the law. They often show persons' problems as they relate to society and give realistic answers very close to those given in the Christian message. Contemporary controversial themes are treated in depth. Persons are portrayed as being of

⁸⁶Trotter, op. cit., p. 47.

individual worth. Ultimate questions are raised and Christian answers implicitly suggested or pointed to in these latter types.

B. Westerns (Adult, other, or general).

Western programs have been on the decline in recent seasons.⁸⁷ Viewers feel there should be fewer westerns on TV.⁸⁸ This may be, as with crime shows, due to the amount of violence which appears on such programs. Again there is concern about children viewing such programs. Children's westerns are simple, the characters uncomplicated, with the ritual of the hero kissing the horse rather than the girl.⁸⁹ The adult western, which currently predominates in this category, is not quite so simple, and the hero almost always kisses the girl! Included in this classification are such programs as "Gunsmoke," "Have Gun Will Travel," "Wagon Train," "Maverick," "Bonanza," and "The Virginian." Among these shows the only one which seems to attract children currently is "Bonanza," and it ranks eighth behind comedy, medicine and war shows.⁹⁰

Explicit content. In the beginning, Westerns (e.g., William S. Hart) stressed the realism and morality of the West's history. But with Hoot Gibson and others, westerns became

⁸⁷ J.A.C. Brown, Techniques of Persuasion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 160.

⁸⁸ Steiner, op. cit., p. 141.

⁸⁹ Schramm, op. cit., p. 38.

⁹⁰ Witty, op. cit., p. 592.

escapistic.⁹¹ The cowboy hero emerged in the twenties. This pre-adult-western hero was epitomized in Gene Autry's "Ten Commandments of the Cowboy." In this industry accepted code, the western hero is a kind of an "adult Boy Scout."

He must not take unfair advantage, even when facing an enemy. He must never go back on his word, or on the trust confided in him. He must always tell the truth, be gentle with children, elderly people, and animals. He must not advocate or possess racially or religiously intolerant ideas. Moreover, he must help people in distress, be a good worker, keep himself clean in thought, speech, action and personal habits. He must respect women, parents, and his nation's laws. He must neither drink nor smoke. And finally the cowboy is a patriot.⁹²

Following World War II, the cowboy hero image changed. He was still chivalrous, but a realist who could not achieve his aims chivalrously.⁹³

The western hero usually fights a villain in order to right wrongs. The villain's wrongs are frequently motivated by greed, wealth or power. Early western heroes would attempt to reason with and reform the villain before taking physical action against the "bad man." As with crime shows, the audience could vicariously identify with the villain's lust and crime traits.⁹⁴ The villain is often not defeated by the ineffective law enforcement but by the unusual stupidity of the villain himself.

⁹¹George N. Fenin and William K. Everson, The Western (New York: The Orion Press, 1962), p. 27.

⁹²Gene Autry in Ibid., p. 20.

⁹³Fenin, op. cit., p. 27.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

The woman in the first westerns was a "frail creature at the mercy of lawlessness, dependent upon the hero for protection." In the thirties and early forties, she was more self-reliant, athletic and sex-appeal conscious. Immediately after World War II, sex appeal became dominant.⁹⁵

Though movie-theater westerns seem to currently involve more realistic and complex characters and plots, avoiding old cliches and formulas (e.g., "High Noon," "Lonely Are the Brave" and "Ride the High Country"), their influence does not seem to be largely felt in the still stereotyped fantasyland of television. Part of this is due to the fact that TV is still showing 1920-30 vintage western movies.

In 1952, TV westerns began to use themes which were a combination of "High Noon" and "Dragnet." "Adult" westerns were thus born. As we will see, calling them adult and showing them in the evening does not exclude children from watching them.

"Gunsmoke" has been one of these adult series. It contains more characterization than action. The "Dragnet" aspect comes in in the underplayed depiction of the U.S. marshal. The elements of civic responsibility and maintaining the law come from "High Noon" emphasis.⁹⁶ But such themes, though originally unique, become stereotyped in the adult western series. For example, "Gunsmoke" spawned such a show as "Wyatt Earp."

Other TV westerns have developed (e.g., "Rawhide," "Have

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 313.

Gun, Will Travel," and "Outlaws"). They have gone from half-hour to hour, and now in "The Virginian" to 90-minute shows--all with basically the same, stereotyped formula.

Implicit content. In the early western, still frequently seen on TV, the implication is that the hero and heroine are paragons of moral virtue. Much has been made of the religious symbolism of the western in this regard.⁹⁷ The hero has been characterized as a kind of "Christ-figure" saving people caught by evil forces. Such implications are not verbalized by viewers but might be present implicitly in their feeling of awe and tension.⁹⁸

The western's appeal to young and masculine viewers seems to come from the implication of the rough outdoors, fighting, horses and women being manly interests. Masculine pride is thus flattered.

The western in many ways parallels the implications of other crime-action shows. The hero often works outside of the law (e.g., "Paladin" of "Have Gun, Will Travel"), implying ineptness of law and subjective judgment of good and evil. Individualism is implied in the "Lone Ranger" image of the self-sufficient hero. The same implications of women, action and the criminal apply also in the TV western.

⁹⁷ Joseph Sittler in Bachman, op. cit., p. 52; and Glick, op. cit., p. 115.

⁹⁸ Glick, op. cit., p. 115.

Effects and motivations. Westerns reinforce the viewer's pride. Masculine pride is reinforced. The fact that the western is uniquely American reinforces a patriotic pride in America.⁹⁹ As with the crime show, feelings of suspense are present. Again, viewers can participate in violence without guilt as they identify with the hero or villain. Thus, escapism and venting of emotion may be provided. In short, the effects and motivations of and for watching TV westerns are very similar to those of the crime show.

An evaluation. Much of an evaluation of the western must remain the same as that of the crime show.

It seems that caution should be taken in abstracting religious symbolism from the classic formula of the early western. It is not seen as much by the current adult viewer and it seems doubtful that he is aware of such implicit symbolism. Interpreted broadly, this symbolism may be felt but it seems obscure.

Though the early westerns were naive and somewhat unrealistic, it seems questionable that they demonstrated any more disvalue than current TV westerns. From frail to sexy heroines hardly seems to be an advancement in image portrayal.

The unique implication of patriotism in the western seems to be a laudable virtue as long as it does not become the pride

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 114.

of space in the false idea that ultimate security of one's national identity will overcome this aspect of the anxiety of finitude. But the western can and has shown the "old west" as hard, monotonous and yet heroic.¹⁰⁰ In those contemporary theater westerns mentioned and in TV documentaries about the west, the human strength and courage of the people of those times has been shown in dramatic and realistic ways. The "courage to be" in the face of anxiety of every kind is a valid Christian message to be seen in the western. It has occasionally been seen in existing TV westerns, but currently is far from being a dominant element.

C. Adventure

Explicit content. The action in adventure shows is not always against criminals or villains. Showing exotic or "other world" locations, the characters may be portrayed battling forces of nature or supernatural elements. They frequently involve exploration and discovery in strange environments. Aside from this, where they have plots, they are often similar to western and crime shows.

Implicit content. To the extent the content is the same as westerns and/or crime shows, the implications are the same. But there is an educational implication of adventure content showing heretofore unknown parts of the world. This may also

¹⁰⁰Fenin, op. cit., p. 45.

hold true for scientific "other world" (planetary) content or science fiction, though it does not seem often to be as realistic and may be misleading. The implication is that these other locations are glamorous, exciting and novel.

Effects and motivations. Many of the effects and motivations are the same as with crime and western shows. The more highly educated are drawn to the documentary type (Lowell Thomas, John Gunther, "Golden Voyage," "Across the Seven Seas"). These shows often appeal to the whole family, especially in the upper-middle socio-economic class.¹⁰¹ Otherwise, the audience seems similar to other shows. Escapism is present in the shows such as "Sea Hunt" and "Adventures in Paradise." These shows allow the viewer to escape into the fantasy of being in another exotic and exciting world.

An evaluation. The unique educational aspects of some of these shows are reality centered allowing the viewer to learn of his brother in other parts of the world; it broadens the viewer's perspective. But the shows which include exotic locales in otherwise stereotyped crime shows seem only to add the further element of escape to the other negative characteristics.

¹⁰¹Glick, op. cit., p. 133.

Light Music (Star, Light Music, Medium Music, Teen Music, and Light Music Specials)

Explicit content. Music is not often heard or seen performed for its own sake on TV. Usually music is either incidental or it is used to support a star or group of performers. Either as part of variety shows or with shows of their own, light music is usually presented by a performer. These performers are most likely to be personalities "built up" by TV, movies or records.

Music is usually used in dramatic shows accompanying scenes of various moods (action music, love music, etc.) The music performed also often appears to be "live," i.e., performed as it is seen or heard. The songs sung appear to be unoffensive to most viewers.¹⁰²

Implicit content. The musical performer, usually a singer, does not have to possess any particular musical ability to be successful on TV. Rather, the main requirement is to be a likeable personality. Echo chambers, microphones, "lip synchronization" (i.e., pantomiming the lyrics) and other electronic devices often compensate for any lack of musical competence on the part of the personality.¹⁰³ The "Beatles," Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and other such phenomena illustrate the fact that

¹⁰²Winick, op. cit., pp. 20-22.

¹⁰³Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 205.

it is not musical ability which is required to boost a show's rating with teenage viewers. The implication seems to be that the music is not as important as the photogenic characteristics of the performer. Rather, the created image of a TV personality with a loyal following is to be desired. The implication seems similar to the prestige and status identity described in the section on comedy-variety stars.

Music for dramatic shows is often not played live, though live music is used increasingly in filmed Hollywood shows. But the networks have large music libraries with most any type of pretaped music (called "cue music") which is frequently used on dramatic shows. This music for virtually any mood is cued into scenes to increase the desired effect of induced viewer feelings. Sometimes original music (e.g., a theme) is composed to give the viewer immediate audio identification of the show. The implication seems to be that moods can be created wherever desired with the use of pre-taped cue music.¹⁰⁴

Music which may be appropriate for another media often is censored for TV use. As with other forms of TV censorship music is not used which is thought to offend any social group. For example, religious consideration sometimes enters into the censorship of music. "Swinging" religious songs or spirituals seem to offend some viewers, especially during the Christmas

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 208-209.

season.¹⁰⁵ Lyrics of songs sung in the theatre, night clubs or records which might be considered sexually "suggestive" or offend some minority group are rewritten for TV use. Often this rewriting will completely obscure the author's intent in the original lyrics.¹⁰⁶ Such censorship seems to imply a common denominator criterion to the inherently individually creative musical art form. It seems to imply a severe caution in the possibility of any lyric being understood in more than one way. It further appears to imply that parts of lyrics determine the music's over all message or context.

Effects and motivations. There does not seem to be any direct data concerning the effects on or motivations of viewers related specifically to light TV music. However, to the extent such music is connected with variety or dramatic shows some of the same motivations and effects would appear to be involved. For example, the music in these shows aids in the feeling of escape. The effect of such "personality build-up" would appear to give the viewer identification or "wish fulfillment" with the performer's status and prestige. Teenagers seem to be provided with a common symbol of their particular sub-culture.

An evaluation. Light music is part of the general category of light entertainment. By itself light music appears to be

¹⁰⁵Winick, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 20-21.

relaxing and entertaining. It is relatively undemanding in its simplicity. Rather than being listened to for its own sake it is either used for an effect or part of an "act." The viewer is not encouraged to develop a taste for more complex musical forms. To the extent this music is used by dramatic programs it may either emphasize moods, feelings and emotions of ultimate concern in reality-centered content or it may avoid or give false expression to ultimate concern in escape programming.

We have previously dealt with the disvalues of status identification and wish-fulfillment represented in TV personalities. We might only add here that it appears to be deceptive and dishonest to present or build up singers with the aid of electronic gimmicks only to exploit their fame rather than their alleged musical talent.

Sports (American Sports, Regular Sports Coverage, Special or Unusual, Boxing, Wrestling, Other)

Sports was one of the earliest program types broadcast by TV (1939 baseball game and boxing match).¹⁰⁷ Sports play an important role in TV production. Starting with the 1963-64 season, NBC is paying \$36 million to broadcast American Football League games for a five-year period. CBS has signed a two year contract with the National League for \$28.2 million.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 195.

¹⁰⁸"Tap Day," Newsweek, LXIII (February 10, 1964), 76.

Explicit content. Often sports events are staged just for television, (e.g., boxing and wrestling matches). Professional football teams call special "time outs" every period to allow time for commercials.¹⁰⁹ Often the "reporter-announcer" of a sporting event is salaried by one of the teams, thus giving a biased description of the game.¹¹⁰ Professional athletic teams are likely to allow a percentage of their games televised in order to stimulate in-person attendance at the rest of their games. Evidence seems to be mixed upon the effect of TV upon attendance, however. But there seems to be hope that "Pay TV" will compensate for televising in the future.¹¹¹

Some sports do not receive too much attention from TV due to their limited popularity. Golf, fishing, hunting, and tennis are examples. Horse racing, however, always seems to have large audiences and is often televised.

Sports programs' ratings are not relatively high, but no program's ratings are high on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. There appears to be a trend to more sports during this time period. This would further diminish serious information and religious programs being broadcast.¹¹²

Implicit content. Sports like action shows, are most

¹⁰⁹Opotowsky, op. cit., p. 199.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 200.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 201

¹¹²Ibid., p. 203.

often watched by men.¹¹³ Sports events are sponsored by products appealing to men. Masculine pride is thus implied in sports programs. But skills, health, physical development and sportsmanship are also implied.

Another implication of TV sports may be that the viewer seems to enjoy the benefits of viewing the game without the effort required to actually attend it. Thus a spectator attitude toward sports is encouraged.

With TV adding status and prestige to whatever it televises, gambling on horse races seems to be sanctioned.

Effects and motivation. Televised sports has resulted in some loss of resources of athletes. Televised boxing, for example, seems to have eliminated small neighborhood clubs which formerly gave youngsters a chance to break into the sport.¹¹⁴

There seems to be the effect of sports being not only more for the spectator but for the spectator in no direct interaction with the athlete or for that matter the official. You can yell, "Kill the umpire!" to the TV set. But the umpire is not going to hear. The feedback relationship so important in drama, comedy and music seems to also be absent in the viewer watching sports on TV. Participation both physical and emotional seems to be diminished by TV sports. Thus a form of passivity seems to be effected or reinforced.

¹¹³Steiner, op. cit., p. 150.

¹¹⁴Opotowsky, op. cit., p. 202.

An evaluation. Sports seems to offer a form of relaxation which is generally more reality-centered than other forms of light entertainment. Unless the "sport" is wrestling, the viewer seems to view the sport for a brief rest from his problems or to admire the skill of the athlete. The program is not fiction. It is real, happening usually at the moment. Yet the participation is limited and may contribute to passivity and a lessening in physical participation in sports. Being stewards of our bodies with the responsibility to keep them in good health, Christians favor sports for this purpose (other values such as sportsmanship, fair play, intellectual stimulation in skillful action, etc., might also be included). If TV contributes to passivity of body and mind habitually, it would seem to go counter to the Christian view of stewardship. The Christian believes that God is the Maker and Sustainer of heaven and earth and that our material and human resources are not ours but His to be used in accordance with His ends.¹¹⁵ For television to give status and prestige to horse race gambling implies condoning the attempt to acquire wealth without honest labor, using the money of labor against 1,000 to 1 odds at a payoff rate not exceeding 600 to 1.¹¹⁶ This is wasting God's resources in the self-deceptive and self-centered effort to overcome the anxiety of space.

¹¹⁵A. Dudley Ward, The Social Creed of The Methodist Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 37.

¹¹⁶Ernest E. Blanche, "Point Out the Odds Against Winning," Together, (January, 1961), 34.

Movies

Films are not watched by viewers as much as films are offered to them. Films may compose as much as 15% of the number of programs available each week to the viewer. But the average viewer may only watch 6% of these. Viewers watch about as many movies as they do heavy drama and information and public affairs. This low viewing level of films may be due to the fact that movies have usually been shown late in the evening and may duplicate what has been seen before.¹¹⁷ However, the networks are now beginning to show first-run films during prime evening time. For example, NBC will show movies three nights a week during the 1964-65 season.¹¹⁸ This may result in many more viewers for movies.

Explicit content. Films are carefully reviewed by network editors for their suitability for TV viewing. Those films which are labeled "acceptable" frequently have scenes or sections removed. Apparently the criterion is what is considered acceptable to "family" audiences. Editors also determine where commercials can most easily interrupt the film. The interruption of films by commercials and editing has caused producers and writers to feel that the message and artistic quality of many movies is impaired.¹¹⁹ Thus the explicit content is limited.

¹¹⁷Steiner, op. cit., p. 167.

¹¹⁸"Tap Day," op. cit., 76.

¹¹⁹Winick, op. cit., p. 22.

But movies still may deal with a wide range of subjects using fast action, exotic locales, expensive sets, and "big name" actors. Even though dated, such production often is "stiff" competition for films made just for TV.

Implicit content. The range of what may be communicated implicitly in movies is too vast to be discussed here. Except to say that the content is usually better than that of the typical TV drama and that the severe editing for TV causes much depth and continuity to be lost. The limitation to "family" viewing implies that much controversial content is omitted.

Effects and motivations. The effects and motivations for watching films appear to be the same as for other types of TV programs, only less so due to their repeated showings.

An evaluation. Films reflect man in his culture. TV's use of such films attempt to impose TV's view of man and his culture upon the film's view; i.e., TV attempts to alter the film to the bland standard of commercial TV. It seems unrealistic to censor the film shown on TV at the expense of dramatic integrity and the film's overall message. Scenes cut out of the total context of a controversial film does not seem to aid the viewer in facing the problems of his finitude but only to protect him in his fanciful, unrealistic world. Movies can carry great messages implying ultimate concern of the Christian type. Some of these have been seen on TV. Though lacking the original big

screen involvement but with respect for the intention of the film they may aid the viewer in facing life's problems.

II. HEAVY ENTERTAINMENT

Heavy entertainment is composed of serious drama, and classical music (e.g., "Young People's Concerts"). Viewers watch this kind of programing more than they do "heavy information" but still less than the vast offerings of light entertainment. These viewers seem to be mainly the college-educated and the Jews rather than those educated through high school and Catholics or Protestants.¹²⁰

Again there is very little "heavy drama" and virtually no "classical music" offered on today's commercial television. When such programs do appear, they are more likely to appear on Sunday in the afternoon than in the evening during the week.¹²¹

Heavy Drama

This category includes shows such as "Playhouse 90," "Play of the Week," "United States Steel Hour," "Hallmark Hall of Fame," and shows which might be considered light entertainment by some viewers. This latter group is included here because these programs usually deal with serious themes in depth (e.g., "The Defenders," "East Side, West Side," "Richard Boone Show," "Twilight Zone," etc.)

¹²⁰Steiner, op. cit., pp. 194-198.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 165.

Though viewers prefer light entertainment, it is interesting to note that if viewers could see any single show again it might be a dramatic presentation and one not so light, either. For example, there was widespread agreement among surveyed viewers on recalling "Playhouse 90" (especially the play "Requiem for a Heavyweight").¹²²

Explicit content. In these programs the "play" rather than content which is repeated weekly is emphasized. These programs can deal with virtually any subject but usually are serious. They attempt to involve rather than titillate their audience. For example, excitement and action are not the program's main objectives. These programs attempt to communicate "messages" through the plot and the actors' skill. The attempt is made to communicate some truth about life. Though usually using the mode of fiction the program relates its message to reality. Violence or sexual content are presented as part of reality and essential to the plot.

In the classic definition of drama the protagonist-hero either attains his goal or he does not attain his goal. If he attains the goal the drama is a comedy; if he does not, it is a tragedy. However, dramas are not always this simple.¹²³ For example, Martin Esslin describes the "Theatre of the Absurd" (the type of drama, some shown on TV, associated with the names of

¹²²Ibid., p. 156.

¹²³Roger M. Busfield, The Playwright's Art (New York: York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 301.

Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco and other avant-garde writers) as transcending the categories of comedy and tragedy combining laughter with horror.¹²⁴

Comedy seems to be the most obvious way to please or entertain the viewer. Seeing oneself and smiling occurs instantly usually not requiring much reflection. Thus one of the reasons viewers more often turn to comedy-variety rather than heavy drama. For as William E. Hocking put it:

The most available emotion is the laugh, and the most external; it has become the habitual American sign of enjoyment, because it is cheapest in terms of sympathetic understanding. The moral emotions are most costly, the indignant response to injustice, pity toward misery the expansion of one's being in presence of an element of human greatness. Readers [viewers] are not prepared to spend lavishly in these costly terms. . . and the mass media . . . make no heavy drafts on either thought or conscience or faith.¹²⁵

But serious drama may also "please" the viewer in tragedy. Eugene O'Neill, whose "The Iceman Cometh" was shown on TV, says:

As for this type of play having a depressing effect, or accentuating the futility of human endeavor, I do not agree with any such opinion. We should feel exalted to think that there is something--some vital, unquenchable flame in man which makes him triumph over his miseries--over life itself. Dying, he is still victorious. The realization of this should exalt, not depress.¹²⁶

These dramas usually have a central theme or idea which

¹²⁴ Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 301.

¹²⁵ Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 303.

¹²⁶ Eugene O'Neill in Busfield, op. cit., p. 76.

unifies the play. This is the "message" referred to above. This theme usually attempts to move men to acts of good rather than evil. Whether serious or comical, this is the explicit intent.

Busfield states:

The task of the true dramatist is to translate the best thoughts into action, to reduce them to terms understood by the average man, to dramatize them and to make them interesting to him.¹²⁷

The drama has a theme. But the theme often is not explicit and is frequently not to be confused with the drama's subject. As we saw earlier in the chapter on content, writer Rose's grandmother-in-law confused the subject of the play with its underlying theme.

Implicit content. The TV heavy drama has a theme which is usually one with an ethical purpose or implications. Rather than the theme being stated openly to preach a point of view, it is often subtle. Professor Busfield cautions playwrights: "The shadow of the author must never fall across the play explicitly, but instead be embodied within the action implicitly."¹²⁸

Explicit messages appear to be out of place in serious drama.

"Any subject which requires long dissertation to make itself clear to the audience has no place on the stage," says David Belasco.¹²⁹ In the drama's action and the resultant dialogue then the theme is implied. J. M. Barrie said that the writer of

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 79-80.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 82.

¹²⁹David Belasco in Ibid., p. 83.

serious drama is telling his audience constantly that ". . . there is here a matter for them to think about, without ever addressing a covert word to them. That is certainly the most difficult part of playwriting, and probably its chief art."¹³⁰ The implicit statement of the theme is thus shown rather than stated dogmatically. The usual ethical purpose of the drama dealing with some aspect of life and man's adjustment to it is shown by example rather than told by precept.¹³¹

Effects and motivations. A drama involving an audience by appealing to them emotionally and intellectually may instruct them, teach them about life. But the emotions affected may be motivated constructively or destructively. Most plays appeal to the former implicitly. The average audience does not seem to mind being taught by an implicit message when the audience can perceive the message and it does not "hit" them too forcefully. But demanding attention and involving emotional and intellectual stimulation to perceive the implicit theme, the viewer must be involved in the drama. Those that watch heavy drama expect this. They expect to be impressed by the performance and the message. They seek out such programs and have a feeling of maturity and being part of an "elite" in doing so.¹³²

An evaluation. The content of TV heavy drama is seldom if

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 84.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Glick, op. cit., p. 128.

ever explicitly Christian. It is unlikely the viewer will see a TV drama dealing with life using explicit Christian language. Biblical characters or Christian topics are rarely presented in anything but the most general of terms explicitly.

But if life, man, "the human predicament," "the present situation," etc., are presented realistically and honestly, then ultimate questions are asked and occasionally close to implicit Christian answers given. Serious and heavy TV drama often does this. Tillich says the ultimate question concerns human existence. Heavy drama usually presents implicitly a particular view of human existence. A view which is

. . . that basic or radical attitude or approach in terms of which one understands oneself in relation to whatever happens to him and to whatever kind of existence is his own.
 . . . [a] mode of being in the world.

says Edward C. Hobbs.¹³³

The heavy drama, usually implicitly, offers the viewer a self-understanding to accept or reject. This is varied broadly. For the meanings of existence; the ultimate concern expressed vary from the Christian meaning. And though only God in Christ, the "new being" giving Christian self-understanding is true for Christians, the ultimate questions of existence are at least seriously asked in heavy drama.

The anxieties of finitude are not usually avoided in heavy drama as in light entertainment. Serious TV drama may give false

¹³³ Edward C. Hobbs, "The Gospel in So-Called Secular Drama," in Eversole, op. cit., p. 146.

answers to the questions but the questions are not normally avoided. Jean-Paul Sartre, an atheist, wrote the play "No Exit," seen on TV. The play showed three dead persons trying to change their past. Not admitting to their real sin, they are in reality in hell from which they choose not to escape even though they have that possibility. The play implies that people choose to reject the revelation of themselves and the exit from hell through confession and repentance, the courage to be responsible for the past, accept the present and look forward to the future.¹³⁴ Stressing the courage to be in spite of finite anxieties, atheist Sartre implies the Christian gospel in a telling way.

Ultimate questions being asked by viewers is a primary goal of "absurd" drama. For in order to grasp the meaning of this kind of drama, the viewer is challenged to formulate questions because he is not given solutions. The play builds up and expresses a "poetic image" for the viewer to explore upon the play's conclusion.¹³⁵ Martin Esslin states that this kind of drama creates a living reality, "an experienced focus of men's lives." He continues: "That is why the theatre; a place where men congregate to experience poetic or artistic insights, has in many ways assumed the function of a substitute church."¹³⁶ This

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

¹³⁵ Esslin, op. cit., p. 305.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 313.

drama is called "absurd" because it presents the world as senseless without a unifying principle. It shows the futility, indeed the sin of man attempting to reduce the whole universe to a complete, unified and coherent system. Such drama is thus absurd to those who are unable to accept their finitude and its accompanying anxieties. The "absurd" drama attempts to turn the viewer toward reality with courage and exhilaration with previously suffered illusions dispelled.¹³⁷ This form of TV heavy drama is even more demanding of attention than other forms, but it also gives more of an implicit Christian message in pointing to the need for God for meaning.

Though not being "absurd" drama or often appearing to be too heavy, there are programs which are lighter yet serious, attracting large audiences. Because they are popular (or they are popular because), these programs do not require as much of the viewers' attention as do heavier dramas. But programs such as "The Defenders" and "East Side, West Side" at the very least deal realistically with problems of justice. More often than not they also raise social questions with personal illustrations. Race relations, capital punishments, poverty, human dignity are examples of problems dealt with in a realistic and confronting way on these programs. Meeting controversial themes directly, these programs often imply ethical solutions based upon the Christian norm of love.

¹³⁷Ibid.

Heavy drama is one of the most effective ways of "negative witness" in its "pre-prophetic" implications. Often communicating emotions and concepts similar or equal to the Christian gospel, the translation to explicit Christian terms is left to the discriminating Christian viewer. Such drama is also a rich resource of illustration for the contemporary gospel preached by the local pastor. But there is a trend toward the cancellation of heavy dramatic shows. The irony of the cancellation trend is illustrated in this situation: David Susskind and Daniel Melnick, producers of "East Side, West Side" received two communications from CBS during the week of February 2-8, 1964:

One was a letter from the business affairs department officially notifying them that "East Side, West Side," had been dropped. The other was a telegram from Jim Aubrey [CBS president] congratulating them on the fact that U.S. newspaper TV critics had just voted the program the best show of the year.¹³⁸

The church can aid in reversing the cancellation of such implicitly Christian programs by promoting their viewing and developing better viewer discrimination.

Heavy Music.

Heavy music like heavy drama requires some attention in its own right rather than simply to provide background for a drama or accompany a personality. This is "serious" music usually of the "classical" type.

Heavy music on TV is limited and not often shown. Part of

¹³⁸"Tap Day," op. cit., p. 76.

the reason for this may be seen in an observation by NBC's music director Samuel Chotzinoff:

You can think up only so many trick shots of the brass section or the bass fiddle and then you're only repeating yourself. Music is made to be heard, not seen, and television primarily is a visual medium.¹³⁹

Each of the major networks maintains a permanent orchestra of more than forty musicians. But heavy music shows have had difficulty staying on the air. CBS has had some success with the "Young People's Concerts." Leonard Bernstein, the concert's conductor, says that the program on TV has increased his audiences' appreciation of concerts not performed on TV.¹⁴⁰

Related to heavy music is opera. NBC has had some good reception with original operas due to their dramatic action. However, NBC's concerts do not fare as well. The operas seem to have succeeded by making them musical drama and translating them into English.¹⁴¹

Implicit content. Music which is well-performed for listening implies a beauty and mystery. "Soothing the savage beast" implies a human expression seemingly unexpressable in any other way.

The expression implies the creativity of the composer, conductor and performers. For the musical ideas, intentions and

¹³⁹Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 204, 211.

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 210-211.

feelings are implied in the music.

Heavy music then implies emotional involvement and individual reaction and meaning by the viewer-listener. And the emotional impact of the music is stressed and communicated through the variation in pitch, tempo and other aspects of the music. These are just some of the possible implications of heavy music. For elaboration would require a dissertation in itself.

Effects and motivations. Again, there seems to be no specific data upon the effects and motivations of TV heavy music. However, there are indications of heavy music's effects and motivations. For example, tests by psychologists indicate music's general mood (e.g., sad or happy, etc.) is often experienced similarly by listeners.¹⁴²

Music tends to appeal quickly and strongly to the viewers' emotions via his senses. Aware of some organization of sound, the emotions are aroused and the imagination begins to bring together the sounds with a mental picture. Speech, conversely, seems to appeal more quickly to the intellect. The meaning of the words registers in the mind with the imagination dealing with the idea. Then an emotional response results.¹⁴³ Thus heavy music may have broad appeal but there are indications many viewers are losing their ability to listen intently to serious

¹⁴² Austin C. Lovelace and William C. Rice, Music and Worship in the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 17.

¹⁴³ Archibald T. Davidson in Ibid., p. 19.

music. Bombarded by light background music, there are indications that persons in great numbers have become insensitive to heavy music, their ability to listen has either been dulled or turned off in self-defense.¹⁴⁴

An evaluation. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "Next to theology, I give the first and highest honor to music."¹⁴⁵ The reformer perceived the close relationship of music and worship. The expression of music with its implication of beauty and mystery is closely akin to worship. As Lovelace and Rice say:

The mind of man cannot comprehend the wonders of God; it can only see occasional flashes of light which shine through the glory holes of life. In the awesome area of life's mystery music helps man to express the inexpressible.¹⁴⁶

Both music and worship deeply involve the emotions in personal and universal expression. With the urge and desire to worship God serious music "penetrates the subconscious depths of the soul" and acts as a form of communication. Heavy music, explicitly secular, implicitly serves this function. In music's generally recognized moods, man's feelings and thoughts are expressed in an honest and inspired fashion.¹⁴⁷

By involvement in a musical performance, a viewer may

¹⁴⁴ Lovelace, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Luther in Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴⁶ Lovelace, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 16, 18.

indeed experience a sense of worship. For both music and worship are creative encounters with God. With a good performance and imaginative and sympathetic listening the viewer may recognize his finitude and yet feel his relatedness to something larger. Through sound, music communicates a mood and through the imagination and intellect a message giving the viewer-listener aid in the courage to be. Television can further enhance such an objective uniquely by also combining poetry and music in song and dance. Through opera, ballet and soloists, for example, TV can add the visual image to music in still another way of making the Christian message implicitly and perhaps even explicitly real to the viewer.

III. NEWS

Most regular news coverage is usually done locally and seldom lacks support because sponsors like it. News holds the viewer's interest and it is cheap. As Opatowsky puts it:

You don't have to pay the actors; you don't have to write scripts for them; and you don't have to build sets for them. People murder other people of their own volition on their own time in their own homes.¹⁴⁸

Virtually no viewers dislike regular news coverage, most of which is shown between 6:00 and 7:30 p.m. nightly. In fact, most viewers watch a news program during this one hour and a half period.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Opatowsky, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁴⁹Steiner, op. cit., pp. 148, 189.

Explicit content. Though there seems to be a trend to longer news shows, TV news programs are unable to tell all of the day's news in the time allotted. Using film reports the day's news is made very vivid. But TV still can not compete with newspapers' detailed accounts and reference availability.

The significant events of the day are usually summarized, being easily assimilated by viewers while they are doing other things, such as having dinner.¹⁵⁰

Though the news reporter often simply reads what has been edited for him, newscasts seem to be associated with a personality (e.g., Huntley-Brinkley and Cronkite).¹⁵¹

Implicit content. News brings the outside world into the home. It brings the viewer into contact with other persons often like himself. When there are disasters, accidents, awards, and other unusual and newsworthy occurrences the implication is that it could be happening to the viewer as well. Through his curiosity, the viewer has feelings of happiness and anxiety, for example, when he views the experiences of others who find themselves on the news.

The "rule" of journalistic objectivity is implied in the news program. The implication is that this is how the event actually occurred and it is simply being reported this way. It is implied that no opinions exist on the event as to its importance.

¹⁵⁰Glick, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

Effects and motivations. Viewers are interested in the day's news. This seems to account for the high rate of exposure to this kind of information programming. But news seems to be the only information highly selected.¹⁵² Men especially watch the news because it flatters masculine pride, i.e., it is considered manly to be knowledgeable about the day's events. But other motivations include a serious and reasonable curiosity about news and keeping up with what is happening. With its immediacy and vividness, TV news brings events to the viewer in a dramatic way. Often these events are of a sensational and personally or socially disastrous nature.¹⁵³ Thus they may tend to produce an anxious reaction in the viewer. For example, violence and death are frequently themes reported.

An evaluation. A regular news coverage program is one of the few times the average viewer is exposed to something serious on TV. The gravity of the day's events quickly and dramatically presented appear to bring the real outside world to the viewer. Viewing events and indeed history in the making, the viewer sees himself in the involvement of others. The dramatic nature of these events often involves violence, disaster and death. This brings the viewer in a very real way to the anxiety of time in his finitude.

Car accidents, wars and floods emphasize the fact that the

¹⁵²Steiner, op. cit., p. 194.

¹⁵³Glick, op. cit., p. 135.

viewer could be the subject of the news. The threat of non-being is made vividly real.¹⁵⁴ Thus the daily news serves the religious function of making the viewer aware of this anxiety. Daily showing how time passes as it records the day's events, the news does not aid the viewer to escape his finitude. The TV news program will sometimes show persons' courageous response to "non-being" events (e.g., racial demonstrations) but seems to stress more the event itself. So indeed, TV news aids in asking the question of existence but the answer often seems absent. An answer is sometimes implied but the structure of "objective" reporting usually restricts the reporter from showing how the news event has any ultimate importance.

Though it does not happen often, the reality of the event itself should be questioned by the viewer. Frequently the presence of the TV camera has actually created the event to be reported. Rather than the reporter just being there when it happens, he makes it happen, giving the illusion this is reality. There are numerous illustrations of this "staged reality." In order to make the news dramatic TV cameramen will "set up" a picture. Though the news can aid in showing the viewer the reality of non-being, it should not show it when in reality it does not exist. False reporting creates a fantasy world of fiction which may have dangerous personal and social consequences. For example: TV reporters were impatient with the calm which had

¹⁵⁴James E. Sellers, The Outsider and the Word of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 149.

set in when federal troops patrolled Central High School in Little Rock. This was several days after violence had been put down.

Along came a group of ducktail-haircut toughs, carrying somewhat sheepishly, an effigy of a Negro. The TV cameramen suddenly saw their chance to produce a lively shot for the evening telecasts. 'Burn it!' one photographer called to the youths. The effigy was strung to a tree and touched off by a photographer's cigarette lighter. The young punks danced around the flaming straw eagerly as the cameras ground and then carried away by their own enthusiasm, they cut loose with a series of blood-curdling shrieks that made for tingling viewing that evening.¹⁵⁵

Thus though in reality there was a calm in Little Rock, the impression was that there was not. There are innumerable other examples of such news creation. Rather than true reporting then, TV sometimes becomes a propaganda medium, dishonestly reporting the day's news. The news can put the viewer realistically in touch with history and his finitude but not by staging the news falsely. It should be pointed out that reporters are not the only ones participating in news staging. Individuals and groups will often stage an event to communicate a message. Senator Joseph McCarthy did this in his now classic "hearings." C.O.R.E. and other integrationist groups have done the same for their cause. In such cases the event is staged to dramatize a point to be made. It can be done for good or evil social change. It is often newsworthy. But it also becomes more than news when it is not spontaneous. It becomes a vehicle for dramatically communicating a point of view and thus propaganda. This becomes a

¹⁵⁵Opotowsky, op. cit., p. 181.

complex moral question or decision on news selection by the broadcaster. That is beyond the scope of this chapter. The emphasis here is to aid the viewer in discriminating in his viewing between the real and false news; to be aware that some news may be used for propaganda purposes, and to relate this to Christian values. To the extent that the news is real and shows the threat of non-being it serves the Christian function of showing the viewer his finitude. Because the reporting is supposed to be "objective," it does not give Christian answers by interpreting the events in an ultimate context. To the extent that the "news" is false, i.e., staged for TV, it should not be portrayed as spontaneous or an event independent of TV. If it is staged by a group or individual to promote a point of view it should be seen as such and the point of view should be compared with the Christian viewpoint.

IV. INFORMATION-PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Programs in this category are usually the least watched programs on television. Viewers say they want more of such programs but in reality they do not select them. Attracted by entertainment programing, light or heavy, or by weekend activities apart from the TV set, people often leave information and public affairs programs unwatched.¹⁵⁶ The adult reactions to such programing seems to be similar to those found in children

¹⁵⁶Steiner, op. cit., pp. 165-188.

viewers. Schramm, Lyle and Parker found that children are often irritated when a program is all or mostly information. They prefer incidental learning from TV rather than purposeful and intentional learning. Like their parents, children come to the TV set primarily to be entertained, expecting only to learn incidentally. So information programs tend to be termed "square." "It is something they are expected to take because it is good for them."¹⁵⁷

Information--Public Affairs

This includes special coverage of current events, heavy and light; documentaries, interviews and information quiz shows.

Explicit content. Sometimes there is a thin line between a light or heavy event. Is a political parade a light or heavy event? Though there are explicit light events telecasted (e.g., surfing championships, fishermen's fiestas) most of the special coverage seems to be devoted to heavy events (e.g., political conventions, on-the-spot disaster coverage, demonstrations, etc.). Documentaries are less spontaneous than special coverage, often using film to more comprehensively inform about an event, era, or person. Interview programs either have a guest asked questions by a panel or individual. Quiz shows (e.g., "College Bowl") impart information by contestants attempting to answer questions. These quiz shows differ from "light" types in a more intellectual

¹⁵⁷ Schramm, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

approach.

All of the programs explicitly present information for the viewer to assimilate. Often the content overlaps regular news coverage. But information programs usually deal with any one news event in more depth and at greater length.

Information-public affairs programing is considered by all (viewer, critic and broadcaster), except perhaps some sponsors, to be television at its best. For in this area television can do what no other medium can do. It can bring an important event simultaneously to millions of people in sight and sound. Many of the most memorable events TV has covered-- the Cathy Fiscus Rescue Attempt, Khrushchev's visit, the "Great Debates," the Vatican Council via Telstar, the Kennedy Assassination and Funeral and the Oswald murder and many other events-- have been highlights of TV's service to the public.

Implicit content. As with regular news coverage, implicitly the people viewed are like the viewer. Or at least the viewer identifies with the person viewed. Objectivity is also implied in these types of programs and is usually there. Seriousness is implied usually in information programs though light and even entertaining aspects often occur. Since information presented and events covered range far and wide, their implications may also. However, these programs are usually reality-centered and other implications may be found within that context. For example documentaries frequently deal with social

problems (e.g., poverty, dope, gambling, foreign policy, etc.), implying ethical solutions.

Effects and motivations. Though most viewers are interested in regular news they do not often watch regularly scheduled information-public affairs programs. However, when they do view these programs it is usually motivated by curiosity and a desire to be knowledgeable about what is currently taking place in the world.

As opposed to regular news, most of these programs demand more attention on the part of the viewer. These programs felt to be "good" by most everyone aid viewers in learning about many topics of the day. Programs which add elements of excitement and/or entertainment tend to make the program more attractive to more viewers. For most viewers seem to prefer to learn without realizing it. So the programs most admired for the information and learning they provide are the ones which best hide or combine their implicit educational content with dramatic and entertaining explicit content.¹⁵⁸

An evaluation. Information-public affairs programing can indeed be entertaining and exciting. Learning can occur in such context of information communication. But to think of TV as purely an entertainment medium is a misuse of God's resources and is escaping reality. All of life is not serious in heavy

¹⁵⁸Glick, op. cit., p. 133.

forms but much of it is and television can bring this reality also to viewers unlike any other mass medium. The combination of sight and sound has been proven to be one of the most effective means of fostering learning and making historical events real. Man was created by God with a curiosity and to grow in mind and educate himself. He was also created to be an historical being. Both of these needs are met in information and public affairs programs.

Recognized by all as television at its best but actually watched by few regularly, information-public affairs programs need more self-disciplined support. Such reality-centered programing needs the sincere support of viewers to bring about a more balanced broadcasting schedule. Though there is often heavy viewing of special events coverage more attention should be given to the often ethical and historical question-raising documentaries and interviews presented.

The Presidential Assassination

Television's remarkable performance in communicating news of President John F. Kennedy's assassination and the events that followed was a source of sober satisfaction to all Americans.

It acted swiftly. It acted surely. It acted intelligently and in impeccable taste.

On that unforgettable weekend in November, 1963, television provided a personal experience which all could share, a vast religious service which all could attend, a unifying bond which all could feel. . . .

said Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹"America's Long Vigil," TV Guide, (January 25-31, 1964), 20-45.

Because the television coverage of this historical event was so unprecedented, it deserves special discussion here. An estimated 100,000,000 persons watched the President's final rites and burial at Arlington (the largest audience to view anything on TV). All commercial broadcasts were suspended. For nearly four days (NBC's coverage totaled 71 hours, 36 minutes) only news, memorials, and coverage of the Kennedy story were seen.¹⁶⁰ The three networks lost approximately \$22 million in revenue with the coverage's total cost exceeding \$30 million.¹⁶¹

Explicitly this is a fraction summary of what occurred: a news bulletin interrupted the soap opera "As The World Turns" at 1:40 p.m. (EST) on CBS. Other networks also read the news bulletin which announced that President Kennedy was seriously wounded by a gunshot in Dallas, Texas. After the second commercial all regular programs were cancelled. Then each network's familiar news commentators began giving the reports. The cameras frequently switched to the Dallas Trade Mart where the President was to have spoken. At 2:32 (EST) it was announced that the President was dead. NBC put its cameras on persons at the moment they were hearing the news come over their car radios in New York. Persons' grief shown on their faces flashed across

¹⁶⁰ News item in the Los Angeles Times, January 16, 1964, Part IV, 11; Richard L. Tobin, Editorial, Saturday Review, (December 14, 1963), 53.

¹⁶¹ Cecil Smith, "Ad Viewers Polled--Aspirin, Anyone?" Los Angeles Times, November 27, 1963, Part IV, 8.

the TV screen. ABC soon showed tapes of the President's morning arrival. At 5 p.m. Friday, former President Eisenhower expressed his shock and grief. All Friday afternoon networks showed film of confused crowds in Dallas and elsewhere. At 6 p.m. (EST) television showed the arrival of Mrs. Kennedy, the casket with her husband's body, and the new president in every detail. At 7:30 p.m. viewers saw the man charged with the assassination. During the night and the next morning the cameras focused on the Kennedy family in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, and the White House. All morning dignitaries were seen entering the White House to pay their respects. By Relay satellite from Rome, Pope Paul expressed his grief. By film and tape, reactions were seen from around the world. TV also followed the aftermath in Dallas, showing Lee Harvey Oswald maintaining his innocence and Police Chief Curry maintaining Oswald's guilt.

Sunday morning, November 24, was to begin with the picture of the casket being borne to the Capitol rotunda. But before this could be shown at 12:20 p.m., NBC showed live Oswald stepping on to a garage ramp in the Dallas Police Station for transfer to another jail. Suddenly out of the lower right corner of the screen came the back of a man. A shot was heard and Oswald gasped and grabbed his side. Panic occurred as Jack Ruby, Oswald's murderer, was then subdued. CBS repeated the event on tape in slow motion. For the first time a murder was shown live on television. Then the networks switched back to the White House for the procession to the rotunda. The camera caught the

grief and courage of the Kennedy family amid the traditional ritual. Throughout the day, the cameras showed the miles-long line of persons waiting to pass by the catafalque, the arrival of heads of foreign government, and musical and verbal tributes.

Beginning at 10:15 a.m. Monday, TV again showed the poignant scenes of grieved family, dignified procession, the Mass, and finally the burial at Arlington. Monday evening network commentators eloquently summed up the day's sidelights and there were more tributes. Tuesday morning the networks returned to their regular schedules.

The implications of the TV presentation of the event are as many and varied as the event itself. However, some implications are obvious. First the event implied that the viewer was in touch with the reality of a history-making tragedy; that all the tragic and majestic spectrum of life and history was being viewed as real. The TV scenes further implied that a commercial mass medium could be sensitive to the deepest and most real human feelings of human frailty, dignity, grief, grace, brotherhood, love and hate. There was the implication that a government based upon law and order can survive the loss of its leader. But there was also the implication of the impact of one human being for good or evil upon the course of history. There was the implication that the viewer was in contact with fellow human beings the world over in their feelings at the same moment. Irony of every kind was implied in many of the scenes viewed. (e.g., the tape and film of the Kennedys activities just prior to

the assassination, the murder of Oswald, the words of the dead President heard as the camera showed his casket, etc.). These were some of the implications.

The immediate effect on most viewers was the reaction of "shocked disbelief." The youth of the President and the speed of the news made the event seem unreal at first. Attracted by curiosity and concern, viewers sat transfixed in front of their sets. Everything stopped and focused upon Dallas and Washington, D.C. As the reality set in, feelings of grief were experienced through the viewers' identity with the Kennedy family and the historical magnitude of the event. With a sense of participation, viewers were involved in a reality to a greater degree than television had ever heretofore communicated and which only television, of all the mass media, could communicate.

In evaluating the TV viewing of this event at least two things could be said: 1. Never before have so many viewers at one time been made aware of human finitude. 2. Never have so many viewers at one time been made aware of history.

Brutally shaken from the fantasy world of the soap opera, the viewer was made to deal with the meaning of existence. The assassination ". . . broke through the crust of daily occurrences and gripped the soul."¹⁶² The anxieties of time, substance, causality, and space were all virtually unavoidable to the TV viewer during the real life drama of those 72 hours. The escapes

¹⁶² Howard R. Moody, "November 22, 1963," Motive, (January-February, 1964), 38-39.

and false securities to avoid or overcome finiteness were stripped away. Viewers saw that good persons with youth, status, money and apparent self-sufficiency do really die and by the hand of evil. Viewers were made aware of finitude in the sin caused actions of the assassin and the assassin's murderer. They saw that the "happily ever after" ending of most TV programs is not always true in real life. Viewers saw that the security of space is not really ultimate security for national governments are of finite men. But they also saw that the leaders of national "space" also put their faith in something more ultimate. They stressed order and justice and faith and prayer, which recognized that they were dependent ultimately upon God. They and millions of Americans indeed, millions the world over, drew strength to courageously face the tragedy and its apparent senselessness. The questions of finitude were faced by TV viewers and in many instances either implicitly or explicitly Christian answers were given and viewed.

Viewers were secondly found to be participating in history. The fantasy world of TV tends to overshadow such participation. The television expressions of an "autonomous culture" were re-examined in the light of the ultimate and unconditional. "Divine judgment" in a historical context on the sin-caused tragedy was implicitly and sometimes explicitly communicated to viewers. Viewers saw that history does not work for the smooth progressive abolition of evil and the fulfillment of man's potentialities. The illusion of America's historical fulfillment was shattered. But the Christian answer of positive growth in history was also

implied in the need for redemption of the culture in the exercise of freedom more responsibly than in the past. The implication of the event was also that ultimately judgment regarding man's historical progress awaits the end of history. It is, therefore, a mystery.

The clue to this mystery from the Christian viewpoint is the agape of Christ. It is the clue to the rise and fall, the renewal and redemption of cultures in history. Wherever the "divine mercy" is discovered above and within "wrath" destroying all forms of pride (i.e., avoidance of finitude), culture may be renewed. It is also the clue to the final redemption of history. There may have been some temporary meaning put forth regarding the national tragedy but only the power and mercy of agape, the "new being" overcomes it. The Christian faith apprehends the divine love and power which bears and suffers historical tragedy with its sin and death and triumphs over it. It overcomes despair and leads to renewal of life. For a while at least, history's contradictions and corruptions were brought to the consciousness of millions of viewers and perhaps even "grace" was seen in that history is a meaningful process but is incapable of fulfilling itself, thus pointing to God.¹⁶³

Religion

There seems to be little audience research on religious

¹⁶³Tillich, Theology of Culture, pp. 37-44; Rienhold Niebuhr, Faith and History (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 232-233.

programs. The last thorough study seems to have been done in 1955, sponsored by the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches. It is interesting to compare some of those findings with the latest audience survey of Steiner. In 1955 as now, entertainment-type programs dominated the channels. Then as now, religious programing represented only 1 per cent of the available TV time. Viewing habits were generally unaffected by religious affiliation. Watching other programs did not effect watching of religious programs.¹⁶⁴ Though it is difficult to push the studies too far in comparison it appears that there may be a drop in viewing of religious programs by Protestants since 1955.¹⁶⁵ In any case, the Protestant viewer differs little from the average viewer and apparently seldom watches religious programs! Even more than other information-public affairs programs, religious programs are broadcast during the least-watched times on the weekends. For example, more than half of all religious shows are shown on Saturday or Sunday before 6 p.m. and twice as many on Sunday before 6 p.m. than on Saturday before 6 p.m.¹⁶⁶ In fact most of the programs are shown either on Sunday morning or early Sunday afternoon. Indeed, as Marty puts

¹⁶⁴Steiner, op. cit., p. 125; Everett C. Parker, David W. Barry, Dallas W. Smythe, The Television-Radio Audience and Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 199.

¹⁶⁵Parker, op. cit., pp. 201-222, Steiner, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁶⁶Steiner, op. cit., p. 165.

it: "when the saints are in church and the sinners in bed."¹⁶⁷

Explicit content. These programs are explicitly religious and include such types as "Lamp Unto My Feet" (Sunday, 7 a.m.), "Look Up and Live" (Sunday, 7:30 a.m.), "In God We Trust" (Sunday, 8 a.m.), "Great Churches of the Golden West," "Gospel Favorites," "Sunday Morning Chapel," "Light of Faith" (Sunday, 8-9 a.m.), "The Adventist Hour," "This is the Life," "Frontiers of Faith" (Sunday 9-11 a.m.), "Confrontation," "Oral Roberts" (Sunday, 12 noon), "It Is Written" (Sunday, 10 a.m.), and "Insight" (Sunday, 1-2 p.m.). There are others. These are most of those programs which may be considered broadly Protestant or non-denominational, appearing in the spring of 1964 on Los Angeles area TV. However, the number of programs seen in the Los Angeles area may be larger than the nation as a whole, as research has shown.¹⁶⁸ We have limited the discussion to "Protestant", excluding Catholic and Jewish. They may be nationally or locally originated and cooperatively or independently planned. Generally, the networks give free time in the order of one-half for Protestants, one-third for Catholics and one-sixth for Jews. Much of all of this programing is on film. Two of the three networks sell time for religious purposes and many individual stations do

¹⁶⁷ Martin E. Marty, The Improper Opinion (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 77; Steiner, op. cit., p. 322.

¹⁶⁸ Winick, op. cit., p. 12.

also.¹⁶⁹

Groups which buy time are often outside of the major denominations and are thus small in number. It might be thought that they could not afford the money. But some of these groups have found that television "wins" them some new members, increases attendance, stimulates donations, sells publications, builds mailing lists and thus finances the program.¹⁷⁰

The Protestant programs may be divided into three groups. First, the "fundamentalist" Protestant programs which for the most part attempt to win converts to the church. To proselytize seems to be the main aim of these programs. There are usually no controversial issues discussed or treated on these programs. Rather they show individual responsibility to God with sharp dichotomies of good and evil. The content seems to stress personal salvation through acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The viewer may thus be saved from sin, death, darkness and worldliness and receive forgiveness and eternal life. Gospel songs are sung (e.g., "Gospel Favorites"), testimonial letters read, faith healing performed (e.g., "Oral Roberts"), scripture reading (e.g., "It Is Written"), sermons given, and appeals for funds made on these programs. Many of these fundamentalist programs have a talking format and are independently

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Erik Barnouw, Mass Communication (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 156.

planned.¹⁷¹

The second group of Protestant programs explicitly have themes that avoid the sharp distinctions of the fundamentalists. Rather, the content shows man as having inalienable dignity with the ability to work out his problems. The content frequently shows problems and man's responsibility for them. Social problems which may be considered controversial issues are included. Further, these programs do not appear to proselytize. Programs such as "This is the Life" are included in this category.¹⁷²

For example, "This is the Life" is a 30 minute filmed dramatic series showing common human problems with which the average viewer family can identify. A Christian solution is offered.¹⁷³ However, the characters appear to be stereotyped. The programs as a whole seem to closely resemble the daytime serial seen on TV.¹⁷⁴ Most of the programs using drama seem to have a message at the end of the program explicitly summarizing the drama's message. This may be a talk or a discussion.

Besides drama programs, other types include talk and church services.¹⁷⁵

The third group of programs are non-denominational and Protestant in viewpoint. They do not attempt to convert the viewer. Avoiding controversial issues if possible, they tend to

¹⁷¹Parker, op. cit., p. 108.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 108.

view religious experience in an intra-personal context rather than as concern for mankind in general. Programs in this category include "Frontiers of Faith," "Lamp Unto My Feet," "Look Up and Live," "Faith for Today," and others. Most of these programs also seem to be of the talk, drama, or church services types. The talk programs tend to be a combination of some devotional music and a talk or sermon. The church service programs (e.g., "Great Churches of the Golden West") often are cooperatively planned.¹⁷⁶

These groups of programs especially have broad explicit aims in their various content. Broadly conceived, they usually stress the "value of religious knowledge and belief to the personal lives" of the viewers. The programs are intended to "help," to "assist," to provide "comfort, devotion and inspiration," to "save the lost," to "sharpen the conscience of the community," to "help develop a design for living."¹⁷⁷

Implicit content. The first group of programs by fundamentalist groups implies easy and simple solutions to the sharply contrasting good vs. evil problems. The lack of treatment of controversial social issues implies that God is not related to society; a redeemed society is not usually preached in many of the sermons presented. In some cases, viewers are urged to reject

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 114, 108.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 111.

society, implying a condoning of social evil. Much of the content used with its special language implies the viewer is familiar with the content. In other words the implication is that most of the viewers are already "saved." Because salvation is immediate, there is no need for a growing course of action, no need for guidance in Christian growth. Some of these programs imply that the church is unrelated to the program.

Faith healing (e.g., "Oral Roberts") implies that identification with or actual participation with the Preacher-healer will overcome physical ailments medical science has been unable to cure.

The other two groups of programs, both broadly Protestant, have numerous implications. First, the stereotyping of characters in dramatic series carries the same implications of stereotyping found in daytime soap opera. Representing types rather than persons, the implication is that they react according to formula rather than to true life situations. The lack of character complexity implies lack of reality. Though the problem solutions are soundly Christian, the contrived situations they solve also imply lack of reality. In contrast with the fundamentalist programs, however, sharp dichotomies are often avoided. Thus it is implied that the viewer is in need of help ultimately and a guide of action is implied, if not stated, often related to the church.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 153-155.

Church worship services on TV imply that the viewer can worship in his home just as he would at church. Through sermons and instructional programs it is implied that the viewer may learn about the Christian faith via TV. Many of these programs (especially non-denominational types) have theological content broadly conceived in a reassuring context. The general presentation imply little doctrinal difference among various faiths. This may also be implied in panel and forum type shows presenting the different religious group options. Thus implications of unity and cooperation may be seen, but also implications of "It doesn't matter what you believe so long as you believe." A generalized picture of common American belief is thus implicitly presented. This is particularly seen, for example, in spot announcements associating church attendance with strengthening the culture and gaining a personal "lift." Here it is implied that the church is seen more as reinforcing cultural values rather than prophetically criticizing them. In the same way the televised annual Christmas and Easter pageantry promotes the general idea of a common culturally accepted activity.

Effects and motivations. There is evidence to show that viewers indeed see the religious programs in a generalized way with little difference between them. For example, the New Haven study found that there is little difference seen between one preacher and another.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 115.

The effect of fundamentalist programs seems to be one of guilt in viewers,¹⁸⁰ while often the more broadly Protestant programs reinforce comfortable cultural values. Most of the programs aim at the non-churched viewer. But the data show that of the few that watch most of them are "of the faithful."¹⁸¹

There seems to be some evidence that though viewers may be able to attend church they will substitute the less demanding TV service. Indeed, such programs may have the effect of the viewer feeling justified for avoiding actual church responsibilities.¹⁸² Often the satisfying and broadly Protestant programs may "... demotivate [the viewer] from any urge to act toward deeper commitment. Whatever can be made attractive by techniques can be accepted without decision or risk."¹⁸³ The viewer then is frequently insulated from many of the culturally unacceptable meanings of Christian symbols. The symbols then become signs for the viewer not communicating the Christian message.

Some programs (e.g., "Talk Back" and "Breakthru") have been directed at a relatively small and selective church audience for instructional purposes. The programs were promoted on a local church level, correlated with study guide by groups and provided opportunities for feedback and discussion. Though research is lacking, it would seem this would result in effective

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 389.

¹⁸³ Sellers, op. cit., p. 187.

learning for the intended audience as opposed to broadly defined material for a broadly defined audience.

An evaluation. Though explicitly religious programs are few and not watched by most viewers, the small percentage that do watch can number in the thousands.¹⁸⁴ There may even be some non-church viewers among this audience. But it is obvious that these viewers' motivations must be carefully scrutinized and the negligible effect upon them realized as they watch present explicitly religious type programs. From the "mainline" Protestant viewpoint, the "fundamentalist" programs can be seen to be even more ineffective in reaching the non-churched (aside from the obvious rejecting of their explicit theological viewpoint).

It would seem that the soap opera type dramatic presentation suffers from the same shortcomings as those of the secular type daytime serial (i.e., female appeal, unreal situations, stereotyped characters, etc.).

The church service on TV implies a participation which can in reality only be shared in full by physically participating in the fellowship with other Christians. The distractions in the home are more than in church and the tendency to be a spectator is great while watching at home. The effects and motivations of this type of program reinforce the avoidance of facing the human situation while falsely appearing to give a worship experience

¹⁸⁴Continuity (Nashville: Television Radio and Film Commission of The Methodist Church, August, 1963), p. 3.

for many. However, it may have value for those who are physically or temporarily unable to attend church services. But it would seem TV is no substitute for face-to-face contact in worship.

Talk, panel, interview and other types of programs showing religious faiths as options implying equality of doctrines should be seen for the dangers of reinforcing the "American way of life," of "common faith" and cultural security. The anxiety of space is avoided as effectively here as in many secular programs. The opportunity to explicitly confront the viewer with his place in history is avoided for fear of offending. The fear is probably real. For with the ease of a dial turn, such an explicit message is likely to be avoided by most viewers. But this proclamation seems to be a more realistic and theologically consistent use of the admittedly inadequate program time than reinforcing viewers' comfortable misconceptions about the Christian faith.

Tillich says we are speaking to ". . . people who know all the answers and who by knowing all the answers have covered very thickly and almost impenetrably the depth of the question out of which the answers once came."¹⁸⁵

If the proclamation is made with any depth, those who know all the answers become offended and thus do not genuinely accept the Christian message. This is because when the questions arise the answers become questionable and some people cannot stand that. So whether it is nongenuine rejection because the

¹⁸⁵Paul Tillich, "Communicating the Christian Message Today" (transcript of a lecture presented under the auspices of The Evanston Institute for Ecumenical Studies, 1959).

true message is not being communicated or nongenuine acceptance for the same reason viewers may feel offended. The true Christian message is communicated in religious programs when it is explicitly and implicitly the same.¹⁸⁶

The real meaning of communication, says Tillich, is "making others participate, in the reality and meaning of something which is given." This can be genuine rejection or genuine acceptance of the Christian message. But true communication of the Christian message is not occurring when it is rejected due to remoteness, ignorance, or lack of existential participation on the part of the viewer.¹⁸⁷

So at least the message may help those who stay to watch realistically to accept or reject the Christian viewpoint. The Word would then be proclaimed with integrity and existential significance. This can be successfully done by showing the Gospel's ". . . significance for the center of our human personal life;" by showing symbols as symbols and the viewer his own human predicament.¹⁸⁸ Realizing the limited scope of the audience, such programing may find its best use in the service of the Christian education program of the local church. Ministers and theologians also can be interviewed and discuss with others on TV in effective ways by witnessing to their faith. Thus the teaching function can be fulfilled in yet another way.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

But can the explicit Christian message be communicated to average TV viewers in any number with any effectiveness? It does not appear so as programing now exists. Martin Marty says:

. . . for all the risks of diminution and muffling through the mask of drama, the portrayal without much verbalization and without any explicit proclamation of the power of God in human lives seems to be the only way of seeing faith at 'prime time' where it really reaches masses.¹⁸⁹

The "message," the expressions of ultimate concern, seems destined to remain implicit in the few evening hours in which it is communicated to a relatively small audience. Christianity's explicit expression will be limited to undesirable daytime hours leaving some possible implicit expression during the evening "non-religious" time. But man is redeemable at any point and the viewer may be educated and persuaded to genuinely accept Christian answers by the lack of answers he gets to his unsatisfying use of television programing and his awareness through the church of rewarding and discriminating Christian viewing.

V. COMMERCIALS

Commercials are a dominant part of television viewing. About one or two out of every ten minutes of TV content is advertising. In the amount of time on the air, commercials are exceeded only by movies and comedy-variety type programing.¹⁹⁰ This is to be expected since commercial television is a business

¹⁸⁹Marty, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁹⁰Steiner, op. cit., p. 205.

enterprise. Sponsors present programs to attract viewers and entertain them and present commercials to then get the viewer to buy their products. But sponsors do not have a totally "free hand" in commercials' content. Though the FCC has very limited power over specific advertisers, networks do edit commercials. Networks attempt to verify explicit claims made by advertisers through testing laboratories and government agencies. Some products are completely unacceptable for TV advertising. For example, hard liquor, speculative investments, feminine hygiene articles and birth control devices. The FCC considers birth control ads ". . . offensive and contrary to the public interest."¹⁹¹ But though there are "code" and other advertising standards, they are often at least implicitly ignored by commercial creators.

Explicit content. Commercials are designed to inform and influence viewers on products in order for them to be bought. Various techniques are used in the attempt to accomplish this end (e.g., demonstration, case studies, "pitches," cartoons, etc.). These techniques are enhanced by the audio-visual medium of television. For example, movement may be shown effectively in change of time and place, activity, impulsivity, etc.¹⁹²

Commercial types vary explicitly. First there is the

¹⁹¹Winick, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁹²Glick, op. cit., pp. 174-177.

"product" commercial. Often using a "sales pitch," this type concentrates upon the advertised item, often using a forceful announcer. Showing little proof, the commercial shows how the product can easily solve a problem situation. The product is claimed to be better than others, appealing to apparently rational motives to buy it. Stressing economy the announcer (usually unknown) aggressively and authoritatively urges the viewer to act impulsively, quickly, in order to benefit from the offer. Usually unconnected with the foregoing program, this type of commercial varies little in its message each time it is shown. It is usually repetitive with little variation. It is also seen as a spot announcement with the products often being low cost and small items.¹⁹³

Similar to the product commercial is the demonstration commercial. Rather than simply making a claim for the product it gives a reasoned explanation and a demonstration. It introduces the viewer to the product and its capabilities mainly by pictorial presentation and rational discussion. Often the product is new on the market (e.g., appliances, household cleaners, and foods). The demonstration commercials may be seen in two ways. First, how to use it and secondly how it works. In the "how to use" type, the product is shown as being used in new and different ways. Instructing the viewer in the use of food or household items, the explicit appeal is primarily to women. Rather than

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 182-183.

stressing its use in various ways by the consumer, the "how it works" commercial describes technical aspects of the product. Appealing to intelligence, an experiment is often shown involving the product. Health-care items are often found in this type.¹⁹⁴

Announcer commercials emphasize a one-to-one conversational relationship to the viewer.¹⁹⁵ Often using well-known personalities, this commercial type associates the product with the announcer-personality.

The animated commercial is usually short, catchy and specific. Usually using humor, the commercial is often clever and enjoyable.¹⁹⁶

The advertised product is displayed in various subtle ways in the mood commercial type. Rather than dwell on the product's characteristics, this type attempts to present the product in a certain emotional setting. Music and dancing are often used in this "soft sell" approach. The mood commercial completes the continuum, being at the opposite end from the "product" commercial with its "hard sell" approach.

Implicit content. In spite of explicit rationality and appeal to intellect, most commercials employ feeling and effect in their effort to inform the viewer about and get him to buy the advertised product. These elements are implied in the quick,

¹⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 185-187.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 194.

impelling, and emotional actions of the commercial. The effect is made to implicitly communicate enjoyment, gratification, pleasure, indulgence, excitement, and fantasy in the commercial "message."

The fantasy is implied in the visual techniques using unrealistic picture changes involving the product. The imaginative and implicitly magical aspects of the product employ little rationality (e.g., "Put a giant in your washer." The commercial shows a giant arm rising out of a washing machine holding the soap product). Though the content of product commercials is mostly explicit (e.g., product solves problem better than others, aggressive, authoritative, repetitive). But exaggeration and implicit emotional appeal underlie the explicit rational appeal. The implication is "Take a chance on this product; it is not expensive anyway--and look at the bargain you are getting."¹⁹⁷ Commercials' showing of the consumer unflatteringly with direct or symbolic assaults upon him, and threats if he fails to buy imply lack of respect for his aesthetic and intellectual capacities.¹⁹⁸

The demonstration commercials imply more rationality but sometimes have wish fulfilling and unrealistic implications. Since they visualize rather than tell about the product, the fantasy that the viewer is the demonstrator is encouraged.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 180-184.

¹⁹⁸ Steiner, op. cit., p. 214.

Another aspect of these commercials is that the demonstrations prove the claims for the product. The demonstrations seem to be real and honest, but in reality they frequently are misleading and prearranged to favor the product.¹⁹⁹

Announcer commercials imply a close relationship between the viewer and announcer. The announcer or personality speaks authoritatively about the product even though in reality he may know little about it. This authority is especially implied when the status of a well-known personality is associated with the product. The personality implies integrity which by association is implied also of the product. A western star's endorsement of a product implies ruggedness, masculinity, impulsivity, gratification and aggressivity. Musical stars imply more refined qualities, higher status, and luxury.²⁰⁰

Animated commercials imply fantasy in their unreal content. The explicit humor hides the implicit motives of the content to influence the viewer to buy.²⁰¹

The mood commercial implies quality, success and affluence in a fantasy context. The implication is that the mood is important and that the product is associated with the mood.

Effects and motivations. Viewers feel generally that most commercials entertain and inform them. Those which are entertaining have greater appeal and are most liked. Viewers learn of

¹⁹⁹Glick, op. cit., pp. 185, 186, 188,

²⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 190-191.

²⁰¹Ibid., p. 196.

new products and their uses from many commercials.

Most viewers seem to be realistic in that they recognize that the commercial pays for the program and thus feel they must tolerate it or are obligated to pay some attention to it. But many viewers (25%) are annoyed by many commercials and find "nothing" to like in them.²⁰² Part of the reason for this negativity may be due to the fact that viewers often react to commercials in emotional rather than intellectual ways. Therefore, commercials often arouse the viewer's anxieties.

Viewers realize commercials are expensive and thus desire the advertising to be creative and entertaining. They also want them to have variety and novelty. It does not take long for the viewer to become familiar with the advertised product and he thus becomes irritated and bored when the same commercial is repeated over and over. Also the viewer likes personalized commercials as opposed to simple announcements.²⁰³

The commercial is not tolerated when it goes beyond broadly accepted norms. For example, the senses should not be stimulated too much. But viewers seem to want commercials to be provocative, gain their attention and make them feel they are getting something worthwhile from watching the commercial.²⁰⁴

Viewers are most annoyed by the product type of commercial.

²⁰²Steiner, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁰³Glick, op. cit., pp. 178, 179.

²⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 180-181.

They complain that commercials' content frequently are vulgar and invade the viewer's privacy (i.e., "bringing the bathroom into the living room"). Viewers tend to especially dislike the exposure to private products, (e.g., bras and girdles, deodorants and mouth washes), "harmful" products (e.g., liquor and cigarettes), and products which symbolically assault the body (e.g., headache and anti-acid stomach pills).²⁰⁵ These commercials have the effect of making viewers feel pressured, anxious and bored. The feeling imparted is that the viewer must act. But though viewers complain about this type of commercial, they often remember it and have at least tried the product!²⁰⁶ The product commercials seem to be tolerated for inexpensive and impulsive buying of products which are new and with which the viewer is not too closely identified. Indeed, a little anxiety seems to motivate the viewer more to buy than not to buy, especially health-care items.²⁰⁷

Demonstration commercials are interesting to viewers because they are often novel and educational. Though they have an element of fantasy in demonstration, those which show how to use the product seem to have a calm and instructive effect on the viewer.²⁰⁸ But they must not be too undramatic or the viewer

²⁰⁵Steiner, op. cit., p. 213.

²⁰⁶Glick, op. cit., p. 184.

²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 184; Klapper, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

²⁰⁸Glick, op. cit., p. 185.

loses interest. Viewers tire of the "how it works" type more easily. But at their best, these commercials give a sense of participation to the viewer. He feels he is participating in a dramatic experiment or trial of the product. But often, especially with health-care products, the viewer is annoyed with the commercial. This occurs because the viewer is uncomfortable when his body and its functions are discussed. But again, these commercials convince many viewers due to their drama of demonstration and instruction.

Announcer commercials give a sense of relationship to the viewer. Viewers feel it is acceptable for personalities to advertise products. The effect of this is to catch the viewer's interest and reassure him of the product's high quality. But sometimes the opposite of what is intended occurs. For example, the well-known announcer or personality dominates the commercial and the intended message goes unnoticed.²⁰⁹

Animated commercials are enjoyed by viewers. Viewers easily relate to these commercials in their enjoyable and short messages, but there seems to be little evidence of much identity with the fantasy.

Viewers associate high quality with the believed expensively produced mood commercial. There is little feeling of pressure and consequently little criticism of this commercial type. Viewers tend easily to identify with the various emotional

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 193.

meanings implied. This emotional mood makes the message about the product seem relevant to the viewer. A general image of the product thus seems to be retained. Therefore, the product is more associated with the mood than with its own qualities.²¹⁰

There has been much discussion about subliminal commercials. This type of advertising involves projecting a stimulus very quickly (i.e., in thousandths of a second), so that the viewer is not consciously aware of seeing it, though in fact he does see it.²¹¹ The National Association of Broadcasters prohibits subliminal transmission of information. Further scientific evidence is mixed about the effectiveness of such techniques. But in fact commercial messages are often communicated below the viewer's awareness implicitly as we have seen. But subliminal advertising as such may be very effective. It could pose serious problems in the future should non-code stations advertise in this way.

Timing is a complaint of many viewers. Commercials are felt to interrupt programs too often and they are too long. The mood of the program is broken when commercials interrupt. Even if the commercial is entertaining and informative if it interrupts an engrossing and critical moment it is resented.

Viewers indicate that they are not easily fooled by commercials' misleading or exaggerated claims. But it is not the

²¹⁰Ibid., pp. 197-198.

²¹¹Winick, op. cit., p. 24.

moral dishonesty they dislike. Rather it is the idea that the sponsor believes that the viewer is so gullible. So the viewer feels insulted, among other feelings. But annoyed as he may be, he still buys the products and feels that tolerating the commercials is a "fair price" to pay for the programs he watches.²¹²

An evaluation. With television in the United States being primarily a business enterprise, it is to be expected that advertising will play a major role in what is seen. But in the Christian view advertising's cultural role is to aid the consumer in the better use of his God-given resources. Commercials should inform the consumer of the true values of the product and perhaps introduce new products or new uses for products, so that a comparison may be made between products and the best one bought. Thus the consumer buys the best product, creating a demand for the best product. But at the outset, most TV commercials often tend to create the demand, not follow it, in order to stay in business. Rather than foster discriminating consumption, all but a few informative commercials tend to encourage impulsive buying, implying the consumer will get a little of something for nothing. Product commercials particularly attempt to simply "brainwash" the viewer into buying through incessant repeating of the message. This shows lack of respect for the viewer's intelligence, counter to that expected of man in the Christian view.

²¹²Steiner, op. cit., p. 220.

Appeals are thus made to unconscious and often prideful desires. Feelings of excitement, indulgence, pleasure, gratification and fantasy are appealed to. Also, attempts are made to identify the viewer with pleasant moods, and the status and symbolic characteristics of personalities. These appeals not only hide the real values or disvalues of the product but increase the anxieties of finitude. The assertions that the product solves problems implies self-sufficiency and that causality is overcome. Creation of desire of products increases anxiety of substance. Appeal to status increases anxiety of space. Health products commercials attempt to reduce the anxiety of time. All the attempts fail, leaving the viewer with unresolved answers to the questions of finitude. Viewers' annoyance with commercials indicate this frustration. They (viewers) seem to vaguely realize the shallowness and waste of such advertising. But viewers still buy impulsively and find enough entertaining and pleasant mood commercials to overcome the intolerable ones. But even these fall short of a Christian view of advertising. Their tranquilizing effect only avoids the commercial's true function. In the view of many Christians, the disvalues of present TV commercials as a whole is not a "fair price" to pay for the programs seen.

VI. THE VIEWER'S ROLES

The various types of programs we have been considering are viewed by persons who play different types of roles. The approach persons make to programs may be illuminated by a look at these life roles from a Christian viewpoint.

Parent. We have confined our discussion to adult TV viewing. There is much which has been written concerning children's TV viewing. We are interested here in children's viewing as it relates to the adult viewer's role as a parent.

Usually the family watches TV together. The activity is an important part of many families' social life together. But often the parents watch action programs because that is what children like to see. Overall, the parents of children under fifteen watch fewer programs, probably because the children have the set to themselves. But TV often becomes such a dominant form of family life that they may not know what to do when the set is off due to need of repair. So, of course, most families simply get the set repaired immediately.²¹³

Though news and comedy shows allow conversation since they do not demand much attention, more engrossing programs do not. Thus, conversation by direct and personal communication is avoided when the family watches TV. This also causes friendships and visiting to diminish. Thus other forms of family activity,

²¹³Ibid., pp. 79, 99, 174.

aside from TV, do not get established or re-established.²¹⁴

Parents approve of shows designed for children or the family (e.g., "Captain Kangaroo," "Father Knows Best"). But their children do not always watch such shows. So-called "adult" programs are often watched by children and parents alike. The family then watches shows with violence, of which parents most complain. Parents do not want their children watching shows with violence, yet they allow them to do so with the result to the parent of guilt feelings.²¹⁵ Parents feel that children may gradually accept the violence, hate, and destruction they see as normal ways of life. They also fear that their children's sensitivity to human suffering may become dulled.²¹⁶ Parents also complain about too much fantasy viewing. Yet these are the very programs most adults themselves watch! Witty found that programs featuring comedy, war and violence were the most popular shows with grade school children. Like their parents, the "Beverly Hillbillies" was the most popular program of the '63-'64 season with children.²¹⁷

The problem may also be partly due to the fact that parents admit to letting TV supervise their children. Parents let the TV set "babysit" for them. There are many rationaliza-

²¹⁴Ibid., pp. 101, 103.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 106; Schramm, op. cit., p. 170.

²¹⁶Witty, op. cit., p. 595.

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 591.

tions used for allowing this to occur. And the highly educated are not excluded. TV "keeps the kids off the streets," "out of trouble," or "out of my hair," say many parents.²¹⁸ When parents do have rules about TV viewing they seem to be more concerned with when and how much their children watch rather than what they watch. The most often used rule is that the child must not watch TV beyond bedtime. But other rules do not seem to be enforced.²¹⁹

There is evidence that early babysitting by TV leads to children being passive.²²⁰ But parents may not be aware of this negative aspect when they see some obvious advantages. For example, children do in fact learn constructively from TV (e.g. some reading and vocabulary learning is aided by TV) and they are "kept off the streets."²²¹ Students say they receive more help for schoolwork from TV than from radio or movies. For example, for grades 2 to 6, the program "Discovery '63" was said to be helpful. Witty found that over sixty per cent of teachers suggest school activities based upon TV programs.²²²

But children still only spend one hour a day reading, while three hours daily is spent watching TV. Also, the hours spent watching TV cut into outside play activities.

²¹⁸Steiner, op. cit., pp. 86-89.

²¹⁹Ibid., pp. 97, 98.

²²⁰Schramm, op. cit., p. 174.

²²¹Witty, op. cit., pp. 594-595; Steiner, op. cit., p. 84.

²²²Witty, op. cit., pp. 593-594.

Parents' concerns about TV are both realistic and unfounded, according to research data. Television does not seem to have many negative physical effects on children. Most children are frightened by a television program at one time or another (especially when harm comes to a character with which they identify and when they are viewing alone or in a dark room). As long as excitement does not become fear, children seem to like and seek it. But there is some evidence that this results in children demanding that real life be more exciting than it actually is.²²³ TV also seems to be used as an escape when the child is having problems or conflicts with family or peers. Conflict seems to cause the child to seek and remember the violent content of TV or its fantasy. But the violence a child sees does not seem to cause such behavior as "delinquency." Rather, the child's problems are brought to television. Some children may thus confuse fantasy and reality. But TV violence at most may only contribute to the child's problems.²²⁴ Findings show that children who have warm and loving homes and normal and satisfying friendships with children of their own age do not view violence in this way.²²⁵

In summary, the data²²⁶ indicates the following:

²²³Schramm, op. cit., p. 173.

²²⁴Ibid., p. 174.

²²⁵Ibid., p. 172.

²²⁶Witty, op. cit., Schramm, op. cit.,; Paul A. Witty, "Television and School Children: 10 Years Together," Together (January, 1961), 24-25.

1. Parents should be aware of the dangers of allowing TV to babysit for them.

2. The parent should be alert that if his child is watching TV more than two and a half hours a day, or while his playmates are outside, the child might be having problems with his family or peers.

3. When his child is acting out or daydreaming about TV fantasy by himself, the parent should attempt to relate the child to his playmates.

4. The parent should not too frequently avoid doing something (other than televiewing) with his child.

5. Parents should be examples for television viewing. They can not expect their children to watch better programs than those they themselves watch.

6. Parents should include reality topics, found on TV, in family conversations (e.g., information-public affairs, science, religion, politics, etc.).

7. Parents may plan weekly family televiewing schedules with their children and include time for recreational and reading activities. (See March, 1958 issue of Together magazine for how this may be done.)

8. Parents can enforce realistic and agreed-upon rules regarding viewing.

In the Christian view of the family and the parent's important role, each individual is respected for his individual worth and potential. The parent has the Christian obligation

to nurture his children into sound adulthood. The nurture requires a warm and loving home where the family has a balanced and healthful way of living. In such an environment, television viewing, along with other activities, may then fill useful and constructive family and individual functions.

Worker. The sense of the worker having ultimate meaning in his work has tended to be replaced by the idea that what he does is merely utilitarian and pragmatic. The mechanistic and objective views of labor have been fostered by the technological and scientific emphases of contemporary culture. The aim seems to be one of as much material gain with as little effort in order to provide as much "leisure" time as possible. The Christian view is that man is to serve God with work serving man. Man, through his work, is the steward of God's earth. Work, then, is part of God's purpose for man. Man provides for his own necessities and fulfills himself in creative work. But neither work nor its material gain are ends in themselves. Work producing for the common good is a Christian vocation and serves God.²²⁷ But it is a "full day's work for a full day's pay." The pay earned is to be spent wisely by the worker turned consumer, and the leisure time earned to be used wisely by the worker at leisure.

Commercial television programing tends to foster the common secular views of work. Rather than leisure time used productively and creatively, it is often used by the viewer to

²²⁷Ward, op. cit., pp. 54-66; Muelder, op. cit., p. 185.

escape his finitude. Passive rather than active activity is encouraged in routine adult viewing habits.

Programs allow and encourage identity with false space and substance (status, prestige, material acquisition) concerns. Rather than accepting the reality of a worthwhile vocation, viewers indulge in fantasy occupations or "playboy" pursuits in television programs. Occupational roles are stereotyped rather than portrayed as worthwhile occupations contributing to the common good. However, there are notable exceptions which admirably show vocations of doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers, and teachers.

Commercials encourage impulsive and indiscriminate consumption on the part of the viewer counter to Christian stewardship. The data thus indicate that the worker-viewer should:

1. Use his leisure time wisely, avoiding use of the TV for unproductive, uncreative, unrealistic purposes.
2. Not identify with life aims being spacial or material.
3. Recognize the ultimate worth of a job in the serving of the common good.
4. Avoid TV advertising's inducement to buy impulsively and indiscriminately.
5. Buy those products advertised in good taste and with an information approach.

Citizen. The Christian is called to be a responsible member of society. He is accountable to God which makes human

dignity, freedom and justice issues of concern to him. For the citizen to be responsible he must develop his decision-making ability. In doing so, he is among other things, constructively critical of the state and realistic in his view of its functions and limits. He has the obligation to act responsibly in the democratic context both individually and in groups to bring about Christian social change.²²⁸

Television can be and is used both for and against this view. The lack of justice and order implied in crime shows, the nostalgic patriotism of westerns, or stereotyped ethnic characters work against this view.

The use of information programing (e.g., regular news, documentaries on social issues, interviews, panels, "Great Debates") contribute to responsible citizenship. Information programing broadcasted objectively makes for an informed electorate and intelligent social action. Serious drama and satire may also imply truths to the responsible citizen. The viewer as citizen in fact owns the "airways." Television time is regulated through government. The viewer "votes" for the programs he wants (consciously or otherwise) by the products he buys, letters he writes, the representatives he elects and simply by the programs he watches. The ratings and market surveys are inaccurate but they do provide some indication of viewers' desires. Viewers may soon in fact give even better and more direct information of the

²²⁸Muelder, op. cit., pp. 15-38.

programs they watch. A Wilmington, California, electronics firm has developed and will soon sell to networks a revolutionary device which is mounted on a truck. The truck travels unnoticed down residential streets. With a revolving antenna it picks up and identifies the signals from over 100 TV sets in a neighborhood, cruising at 15 miles per hour. The signals indicate the channel being watched on each TV set and electronically sorts and counts them. "Fifty strategically placed trucks could survey 160,000 sets in 30 minutes."²²⁹

The data suggest that the viewer as citizen should:

1. View programs which make for responsible citizenship (i.e., reality drama, satire, and information).
2. View programs which portray man as responsible and embodying genuine worth.
3. Avoid fantasy programs undermining order and justice.
4. Vote for better programs, by selective buying, writing sponsors and broadcasters of programs he likes and dislikes, writing the Federal Communications Commission about poor broadcasting; elect representatives who will work for legislation to improve broadcasting.

Summary. In this chapter we have surveyed most of the offerings on commercial television. The content was evaluated according to explicit and implicit aspects and to its effects

²²⁹ Jack McCurdy, "TV 'Snooper' Identifies Channel Being Watched," Los Angeles Times, March 1, 1964.

and the viewers' motivations for watching it. We thus have presented data describing the viewer's habits and what he sees. We have attempted to show how the programing either does or does not express ultimate concern and how it relates to specific Christian viewpoints. We have attempted to demonstrate how most programs viewed either increase or avoid the anxieties of finitude.

Finally, we have related some of the data and evaluations to the viewer's role as parent, worker and citizen, with suggestions derived from the discussion.

Chapter Seven next takes the material of this chapter, abstracts principles for viewing, and suggests possibilities for application.

CHAPTER VII

A SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES FOR VIEWING

In this concluding chapter principles for television viewing are presented. The principles are derived from the data discussed and evaluated above. The principles are in no way final but should be seen as guides based upon the Christian criteria used throughout the discussion. However, as principles it is hoped that they will aid in clarifying what is a Christian use of the television medium. Thus the principles will allow a genuine acceptance or rejection of the Christian viewpoint with regard to TV viewing.

In some cases the principles suggest possibilities for application by the local church pastor. Also the constructive use of some of television's effects is suggested. These viewing possibilities are explored. Finally, recognizing the limitations of this dissertation, the need for further research is indicated and discussed.

I. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

We have seen that TV deals with the categories of life (time, space, causality and substance), or the anxieties and questions of existence, in various ways. The viewer either accepts or rejects TV's treatment of these categories as demon-

strated in his viewing habits and resultant behavior. A great deal of study is required to evaluate from the Christian viewpoint, TV's treatment of the categories and viewers' reactions to them. We do know enough, however to suggest principles which ought to be accepted by viewers.

Most of TV's offerings allow the viewer to escape from reality and therefore not to deal with the questions which ultimately matter most to him. Most TV programs (e.g., comedy-variety) avoid life's questions and Christian answers to them. The great amount of time devoted to such programs both in the broadcasting schedule and in viewers' daily routine suggests that viewers go beyond the constructive and valid relaxation uses of the medium to spiritually destructive uses. Viewers should not completely fill their viewing time with comedy-variety, suspense-mystery, crime and daytime serial programming. Habitually watching such shows only increases life's anxieties by the continual attempt to avoid them.

Some TV programming actually raises the questions of existence and their accompanying anxieties. Some of the programs which appear to avoid them may even raise such anxieties implicitly. Family comedies, for example, may raise questions involving intra-family problems. Few programs raise ultimate questions explicitly. Documentaries, human interest news, heavy drama, and religious programs may do so. But most of the questions lie behind the explicit facade. Viewers should look for the implicit ultimate questions in drama, news, public affairs, and even in

crime and comedy shows. The viewer should be aware of the fact that such questions are often raised just to excite the emotions with no answer or solution intended. Other times questions may be asked with the intention that the viewer must find the solution. But the viewer must be on guard against the often too-simple and moralistic solutions offered to the ultimate questions raised. Christian answers are not moralistic, usually not simple and often not easy to accomplish.

A few television programs deal with life realistically and give answers somewhat close to Christian positions, at least implicitly. Viewers must consciously seek out these programs for they may not be the most popular. These programs often fall into the less-watched categories (e.g., information, drama, music, satire, and religious). But if a more Christian use of the medium is to occur, viewers must discipline themselves to include such programs in their daily routine.

In turning to TV production, the viewer should be aware of the underlying complex, competitive economic pressures in the television industry. He should also be aware of the technical and time limitations in the production of shows.

It should be remembered that in the Christian view, advertising's cultural role is to aid the consumer in the better use of his God-given resources. Therefore, commercials should inform the consumer of the true values of the product so that a comparison may be made between products, and that the best product may be purchased. This means that commercials should not promote

impulsive buying, or imply that the consumer will get something for nothing. Commercials also should respect the viewer's intelligence and not appeal to unconscious and prideful desires, (e.g., feelings of excitement, indulgence, fantasy, and status). The viewer should recognize that products should not be portrayed as solving all of a person's problems so as to imply that a person may solve his problems without an ultimate dependence upon God.

Since advertisers and others usually attempt to give the viewer what he wants, the viewer needs to let them know, as much as possible, what he does want. Viewers should encourage advertisers not to let commercials cut into dramas irrespective of plot or action nor to let films be interrupted by commercials where they might break up the film's mood. Also films shown on TV should not be censored at the expense of dramatic integrity and the film's overall message. In the same sense viewers should voice disapproval of advertising agencies' attempts to alter scripts so as to change the overall intention of the drama. Since ultimate questions are not raised effectively unless life is realistically presented, in making their views known, viewers should encourage advertising men and others to allow writers to write on controversial themes.

Television should not be considered as an influence upon behavior apart from other influences. Rather it should be thought of as a genuine and justified, relaxing leisure time activity when viewed in the context of a balance of other

activities. The activity of TV viewing should not habitually replace direct interaction with family members and friends, or otherwise continuously detour conversation, visiting, or going out. Families should also not depend upon TV viewing to fulfill their daily routine. The viewing should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face conversation. Persons who tend to use TV in this way should be involved in a true Christian fellowship. In social interaction, the content of light entertainment programs should not be used continuously as the basis for face-to-face conversation, avoiding deeper levels of conversation.

Comedy-variety shows are of value for temporary release of tension. But used for prolonged avoidance of true insight into life's problems, they tend to send the viewer back to life without true answers to ultimate questions. Some TV comedy and humor can give insight into life while being entertaining. Comedy does not have to avoid ultimate questions in order to be funny. The tragic and comic go together.

Programs of all types have theological and ethical relevancy either explicitly or implicitly since they involve symbol systems of values concerned with life and man's place in it. When a program realistically portrays man's human condition it gives an honest view of life and deals with ultimate questions. Viewers should not be persuaded by oversimplified and thus unrealistic giving of simple moral solutions to real life complex problems. The viewer should recognize stereotypes in dramas

and other program types as making man less than man in the Christian view and reduces individual differences. He should further see that stereotyping tends to reinforce prejudice of minority groups. Viewers should also not identify with the material success of fictional characters, for the viewer is not the character and all of life's problems are not solved by material acquisition. Viewers should encourage writers to continue to produce creative scripts in good taste and with solid dramatic values. Controversial dramatic content should also be encouraged to lead rather than follow public acceptance. Viewers should have confidence that TV can produce great programs and expect such programs. Viewers should regard as unreal and false any portrayal of contestants as solving life's problems easily through the acquisition of prizes on a quiz show. Persons should not be motivated to watch another person's suffering on quiz and audience participation shows by impersonal curiosity and entertainment, but by personal compassion and concern. But the desire to test wits and learn from questions asked contestants seems to be a wholesome and reality-centered activity. Yet, viewers should not accept dishonest quiz shows as being really true and honest, or believe that they are necessarily getting a "sneak" look at celebrities in panel and game programs.

Daytime serials should not flatter middle-class pride, use poor dramatic form, or unrealistic life situations. The viewer should not expect more than a reinforcement of basic societal norms of the mother-wife role in the daily soap opera.

The female viewer, in viewing such shows, may find the value of courage to cope with daily problems. The viewer should recognize that when divorce must be shown it should be shown as being tragic and yet possibly redemptive. It is a serious matter and should be treated as such.

It should be recognized by viewers that violence should be shown only when germane to the plot of a drama. It is the responsibility of the parents as well as the broadcasters to protect children from too much imitable violence in TV programs. The Christian affirms that he lives in an orderly universe with laws instituted by God. Therefore, a crime show character who attempts to redress wrongs on his own before exhausting established laws promotes chaos, disorder and anarchy. For a program to suggest distrust and suspicion for the law is to promote freedomlessness, self-interest, and ultimately lovelessness. It is therefore wrong in the Christian view. The crime show hero and the viewer who identifies with him should not act merely in his own judgment of what is right and wrong nor should he easily correct the situation outside of the law. This suggests self-sufficiency without the aid of the law or God, and is therefore sin. Also, the hero should be seen as human and thus physically destructible as are other human beings. The crime show hero may express the impersonal quality of our present culture, but he does so in a negative way. In crime and other programs, sexual relationships should be portrayed with the woman having personal

worth. More than the naturalistic and temporary aspects of sex should be at least favorably implied. The full possibilities of wholesome and responsible sex relationships should not be obscured.

The western's implication of American patriotism is laudable as long as it does not become the pride of space falsely implying that ultimate security of one's national identity will overcome this aspect of the anxiety of finitude. The historic west should be seen in reality as hard, monotonous and yet heroic. The human strength and courage of the people of the historic west should be seen in dramatic and realistic ways in western dramas. Also adventure shows should be reality-centered, allowing the viewer to learn about his brother in other parts of the world and about the potentialities of science.

Heavy drama dealing with life may present the human predicament, the present situation, realistically and honestly, asking ultimate questions and pointing implicitly toward answers that are close to Christian answers. These programs dealing with serious themes (e.g., justice and social issues) are commendable for giving ethical solutions based upon the Christian norm of love. Heavy drama is one of the most effective ways for the Christian message being communicated implicitly over TV. The trend to cancellation of heavy dramatic programs is regrettable and should be resisted by viewers.

Musical performers should be judged by their musical talent rather than by fame and electronic gimmicks. To the

extent that light music is used by dramatic programs, it should be seen as emphasizing moods, feelings and emotions of ultimate concern in reality-centered content.

Heavy music should be seen frequently as a value in communicating a sense of worship as a creative encounter with God. With a good performance of heavy music and sympathetic listening, the viewer may recognize his finitude and yet feel his relatedness to something larger.

The viewer should be aware that TV news often aids in asking the question of existence but usually leaves the question unanswered. To the extent the news is real and shows the threat of non-being, it serves the Christian function of showing the viewer his finitude. But the reality of a news event should be questioned by the viewer, since events are sometimes artificially created by the news media. If an event reported by the news program is staged by a group or individual to promote a point of view it should be seen as such and the point of view compared with the Christian viewpoint.

Man was created by God with a curiosity contributing to his growth. This need is partly met in information and public affairs programs. Viewers, therefore, should use TV not only for entertainment but also for learning and education. To think of TV as purely an entertainment medium is a misuse of God's resources and is attempting to escape reality. Entertaining, exciting, and dramatic elements added to information programs where possible may aid the viewer as seeing learning and his

relationship to historic telecasted events as not being dull or irrelevant. Public affairs programs (e.g., coverage of the Kennedy assassination weekend) should be considered as having the values of raising the deepest of human feelings and making viewers intimately aware of man's place in history.

Somewhere on TV the gospel should be proclaimed with integrity and existential significance going beyond mere reinforcement of viewers' comfortable misconceptions about the Christian faith. The true and full Christian message is communicated most clearly by TV when it is both explicitly and implicitly expressed. But the Christian faith cannot be presented explicitly in a controversial way that will be accepted by all viewers.

True communication of the Christian message is not occurring when it is rejected due to remoteness, ignorance, or lack of existential participation on the part of the viewer. This may be partially overcome by religious drama programs adhering to high standards of dramatic presentation rather than employing unbelievable stereotypes. Programs showing religious faiths as options, implying equality of doctrines, should be considered as having dangers of reinforcing the misplaced views of the "American way of Life," of "common faith," and of cultural security. Also, TV religious programs are not adequate substitutes for face-to-face contact in worship. However, the viewer may be educated and persuaded by TV genuinely to accept Christian answers to his ultimate questions. This will begin to occur when he does not receive answers from his unsatisfying use of television program-

ing. He may then become aware, through the church, of rewarding and discriminating Christian television viewing.

II. THE USE OF PRINCIPLES BY THE LOCAL CHURCH PASTOR

The local church pastor can do much to counteract the shallow cultural emphases expressed on television by making use of the above viewing principles in his ministry. He may also constructively exploit the known effects of TV in more meaningfully communicating the gospel to his parishioners.

Because he recognizes the tendency of TV content generally to reinforce unchristian cultural expressions, the minister should make every effort to dispel the comfortable image of Christianity shown by implication on TV. The minister should encourage viewers and, where possible, leaders in the TV industry, to view and produce more controversial programs dealing with important issues of the day (e.g., civil rights), treating religion seriously, avoiding stereotyped religious programs and dealing with tragic themes rather than just "happy ending" fantasy.

The minister can also encourage creative Christian programming in other ways. He can promote the viewing of either explicitly or implicitly Christian programs by announcement and sermon illustration. He can support creatively produced denominational and interdenominational production of religious programs.

The pastor can be instrumental in organizing criticism to

be expressed to industry representatives, usually by letter. One letter, personally written, is often carefully considered by television representatives. At the present time it is one of the few ways churchmen may directly vote for the type of programming they want. Locating and enlisting the help of opinion leaders within the local church can be valuable here.

The use of television frequently is a part of the symptoms expressed by emotionally disturbed persons. The minister may be sensitive to the emotionally unhealthy ways in which persons use television. In his counseling and calling the pastor may discover a child who watches too much TV while his playmates are outside playing. He may be alert to this clue, perhaps indicating a problem in the child's withdrawal. The pastor may discover a lonely woman yearning for fellowship by using TV as a substitute for conversation. He might want to invite her to a rewarding involvement in a church group.

Some dramatic programs deal with real life situations in such a way that persons can identify with the characters or promote discussion of social issues. Such programs can provide a stimulating springboard for discussion in youth and adult church groups.

Denominational television programs can be a valuable aid in the church's education program by reinforcing face-to-face discussions. Learning by children and adults from the program may also be made more effective by using correlated printed material. Research shows that it is more effective to educate

children to new opinions on various issues via television than it is to change the already-existing opinions of adults by the same medium. Television can be a useful church school tool in getting in at the beginning of the creation of the Christian viewpoint in children.

Finally, the minister may personally participate in TV programs. He may appear on panel or interview shows where the Christian message may be presented with integrity. His message may be made more effective by his personal TV appearance. He may reach a larger audience, his position in the community may be enhanced, new persons may be attracted to the church, and the gospel may be reinforced within his local congregation. In appearing on TV he may remember proven methods of presenting his message persuasively in order to communicate it more effectively. For example, he should anticipate the age and educational level of his audience, avoid extreme "threat appeals," and repeat his viewpoints with variations.

In these and other ways, the minister may enhance his calling, deepen his parishioners' faith, and with them make a better social witness.

III. THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Much is indicated for further study by this dissertation. Any research involving persons and their behavior is inexact and requires long-term investigation. The complexity of discerning the effects of television suggests more research. More attention

needs to be spent upon the conditions under which TV's effects occur.

Further study should be made of viewers generally with regard to their efforts to watch less TV. How do emotional conditions affect viewing? What is the basis of guilt in TV viewers? More needs to be known about how viewers feel while they are watching TV shows, in addition to relying merely upon interview and diary techniques.

Generalizations about the effect of TV violence are still incomplete and require a longer period of study. Other effects of TV upon children also need to be explored on a long-term basis since the TV medium is still relatively new and watching comes as a fresh experience to each generation of young viewers.

The principles outlined above should be tested. Scripts should be analyzed in depth with regard to the principles. More detailed content analyses of program types should be made.

A thorough study should be made of the viewing habits of Protestants, seeking clearer answers to questions such as: To what extent does the Christian faith effect viewing? How do Protestant viewers differ from other viewers? How does church activity affect viewing (amount and quality)? How effective or meaningful are religious programs to Protestants? (Questions asked in the 1962 Annual Report of the Television, Radio and Film Commission of the Methodist Church, Nashville, Tenn., p. 28, would be useful here. The study by Steiner applied to Protestants would be helpful in discovering their viewing habits and

would provide a basis for comparison of the already collected data.)¹

We yet but dimly see even as much as an indication of direction in unraveling the tangled lines of commercial television's problems and potentialities from the Christian viewpoint. There are great dangers and equally great potentialities for good. We have begun to understand and to use the medium. One of the most important tasks before us is to further these efforts.

¹Gary A. Steiner, The People Look At Television (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

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